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Finished and unfinished selves

Shirley Robin Letwin

BARUCH HOCHMAN
The Test of Character: From the Victorian Novel to the Modern
240pp. Associated University Presses. £18.50.
0886 31213

The idea of character has fallen on hard times. Critics and novelists feel free to dispense with it. A serious people hear that a man is a liar, they won't examine his character but deplore the social pressures that deform human nature in modern industrial society, or the repression of his libidinous drive.

The most uncompromising version of the idea of character has appeared in France. Alain Robbe-Grillet has dismissed the novel with characters as the peculiar product of a period devoted to the "apogee of the individual" and therefore a thing of the past. The things that inhabit his own novels have no names because, as he says, they have "neither a nature nor an identity" and inhabit a world which "obliterates itself as it goes along". Anything can therefore mean anything and the world is purged of the meanings that pollute traditional art. That is how, Robbe-Grillet asserts, the new art accomplishes its mission to liberate its audience for it shows them that they need not be encumbered by inherited ideas and are free to remake the world just as they please.

In England, the antipathy to character has taken a different turn. Wilson Knight denounced the concern with character in Shakespeare's plays as a refusal to dig below the surface "to reveal that burning core of mental or spiritual reality from which each play derives its nature and meaning". The English preoccupation with "the creative personality", Knight charged, has not only made criticism possible but has also rendered the country as a whole, in sharp contrast to Germany, "spiritually confused and imaginatively feeble". A less sweeping but more influential attack on character with character was taught by F. R. Leavis. He condemned the English critical tradition which dismissed merely "in the creation of character" for being "innocent of any adult criticism of point and relevance in art". This did not prevent Leavis any more than Wilson Knight from discussing characters with great insight, but it meant that he regarded character as a symbol of qualities being denounced or praised. He admitted the characters in *Hard Times* because they were spokesmen of Dickens' critique of the evils of Utilitarianism and industrialism.

A notable challenge to this tendency appeared in John Bayley's *Characters of Love*. He even suggested that "perhaps the time has come to ask ourselves whether the query, 'How many children had Lady Macbeth?' is really quite so absurd as it sounds". But there has been no great rush to take up his challenge. It is therefore welcome and refreshing to find the idea of character defended by Baruch Hochman in *The Test of Character*. His argument, which approaches the issue from a surprising angle, is that the portrayal of character is both very much present in modern novels and superior to the Victorian efforts.

He traces the Victorian idea of character to Aristotle and takes it to be an idea of a fixed entity which displays itself in choice and is shaped by circumstances. In Victorian fiction, he identifies, "he says, with being 'fixed' and 'finished', as opposed to being, like a child, 'open and fluid', a vessel of hope and potentiality". As this vessel could not enter the adult world, "where even fantasy is dangerous", where there is no joy, only a "deadly" without being emptied of its feelings and aspirations, Victorian novels are all concerned with a conflict between the finished world of adults and the aspirations of the young. They assume that there are universal moral principles which adults must accept and which the young must learn.

What went wrong in Victorian writing was not due to any failure in the novelists' perception of reality, Hochman believes, but to a commitment to "values and solutions that went against the grain of his reality". George Eliot, he argues, brilliantly exposed the "compromises and hypocrisies of her culture", but she refused to question "the moral principles on which the individual and community operate", and held the individual "wholly and solely responsible for his fate". Although she showed Middlemarch to be "a swamp" bound to destroy a man like Lydgate, she still blamed Lydgate's failure entirely on himself. This inability to admit the truth, to scrutinize the "pressures" under which the superego suffers, led Victorian novelists to draw distorted, "flattened" figures who are permitted only "the most limited range of fantasies and impulses". Because they dared not probe the "dreads and desires", the "incestuous and aggressive wishes", the sexual fantasies and impulses which constitute real "inner life" of human beings, Victorian novelists showed only the "social masks" of people and nothing of the rebel who remains alive enough to assert himself against "communal values".

The inadequacy of Victorian novelists is seen by Hochman as a product of their social conditions, of the "perpetual and inexplicable self-transformation" of Victorian society which destroyed consensus and coherence. This drove the novelists, on the one hand, to try to provide "a fictive construct within which the appearance of coherence, if not of community, provides a surrogate for something unattainable in the real world", and on the other hand, to join the effort to maintain the peculiarly repressive moral code that was imposed by bourgeois society to insure the "subordination of individual need" to productivity and utility.

We reach the heart of the matter when Hochman turns to the "modernists", Lawrence, Joyce, and Woolf, who, unlike the Victorians, "strive to go below the surface of choice". Here we learn that the modernists have outdone the Victorians because, for all their disputes with Freud and his disciples, they shared "a view that is akin to the psychoanalytic concept of the self". They assumed that the habitual "structure of behaviour" in individuals is "imposed upon or emerges from the play of underlying predilections and impulses", like Freud; they are chiefly interested in the unconscious and see childhood as a "realm of dread, desire, and potential destructiveness" which is the source of all adult difficulties.

Liberation from the illusion that there are "firm values and forms towards which the self can strive and through which it can realize itself" made possible the new outlook. Since it could no longer be supposed that anything other than selfhood could be truly known, modernist writers began devoting themselves to exploring selfhood. But instead of dwelling on "the struggle with conscience" or "the concern with ambition" that animates much of Victorian fiction, they tried to penetrate beyond "the seemingly solid social and moral surface of the self" to the essences that underlie them "in order to reveal 'the energy that thrashes within the cages' of individual selves. Because they refused to impose upon the individual's experience 'a falsifying order of cause and consequence', they abandoned 'the tight framework of the artificially plotted story' in the traditional novel. That is why—and not vice versa—Hochman insists, the modernists developed new techniques which enabled them to reveal 'the shifting surfaces of personality', 'the flux of sensibility and the elusiveness of the self', never noticed by the Victorians because they were obsessed with 'the literal glare of a simple single identity'.

Although Hochman finds it difficult to make his scheme fit some novelists who are chronologically "modernists", such as James, Conrad and Forster, he has pointed to a fundamental distinction between two sorts of literature. His analysis of modernist novels can certainly help readers to find their way through them. But he has not properly identified the distinction that he has recognized because he is committed to a "psychoanalytic" view of human beings. This has led him to ignore the fact that, what though he discusses them with great care, other sorts of readers have considered essential. Why Lydgate chose a wife's product of Miss Lemon's finishing school, the role played in his downfall by his compassion, how his character developed under Dorothea's influence, the differences in the aspirations of Lydgate, Rosamond, Dorothea, and Casaubon—

such questions become irrelevant from Hochman's point of view. He generalizes about English Victorian writers without distinguishing between Emily Brontë, whom he considers at length, and Trollope or Elizabeth Gaskell, whom he does not mention. And he lumps English, French, and Russian writers of the same period together as if Stendhal, Eliot and Tolstoy all thought alike. The modernists suffer as well. Even readers who might not be outraged by the coupling of Virginia Woolf with Lawrence may feel that something significant has been overlooked.

His psychoanalytic view also involves Hochman in contradictions. He tells us that the undeformed individual of modernist novels is "all instinct and impulse" because he has torn himself free from the "mechanical" restraints of social life. Yet he feels obliged to acknowledge that "without consciousness nothing is possible" and that "consciousness qualifies" instinct and nature. Sometimes he says that choice, being the mere "surface" or "mask" of selfhood, is of no importance, but at other times he declares that though "the grounds and direction of moral choice" in modern novels are different from the Victorian ones, "choice itself is no less decisive". He charges the Victorians with thinking—wrongly—that character is fixed, and then tells us that the modernists try to reveal "the essence" of selfhood, which would seem to be unchanging. Although he emphasizes throughout that the modernist self is full of movement and vitality, he speaks of the self as if it were an inert substance being pounded by external forces. We are told that the self is "decanted" into "objectified relationships", that it suffers "pressures" and "releases", is "dissipated", "negated" and "deformed", "assaulted" by rage and desire and "torn" between contradictory impulses. What never appears is a conception of the human individual as an agent of understanding, engaged in making sense of himself and the world, that is to say, an intelligent being.

This is the kind of self that English Victorian novelists did believe in. And that is why, as Hochman candidly acknowledges but cannot adequately account for, their novels still have a peculiar vitality and interest even for readers brought up on Freud. It also explains why Victorian novelists regarded the words and actions of people not as a mere "surface" covering another deeper reality, but as the only reality of the human world. In this picture, words and actions are inseparable from the selfhood of human beings because words and actions are shaped by a consciousness which is not just a succession of random images and desires as in Hochman's picture, but an elaborately organized network of memories, beliefs, habits and dispositions. In other words, a personal consciousness is understood to have a distinctive ordering and this is what constitutes a "character".

This sort of character bears no resemblance to a fixed pattern made for all time by the mark of a stamp. On the contrary, whereas Hochman's "psychoanalytic" view reduces human beings to testaments of a universal system of impulses and fantasies which vary only by being more or less satisfied or repressed, in the Victorian view constant change is intrinsic to a character and no two characters can be identical. Changes in a character continue as long as there is life because a human being cannot avoid constantly responding to his experience. But the changes need not disrupt the established identity of the character because his memories, beliefs, habits and dispositions sit in conclave to assign each judgment to its rightful place and so connect the new with the old. That is why the Victorians assume that one cannot talk about character without talking about choice.

It is not immobility that maintains a character, but stability. And stability is displayed, not in adherence to a catechism, but in the steadiness of the kinds of reasons and reasoning that enter into the choices of interpretation and responses. In short, what constitutes a character is not the doing of this or that but a manner of moving about in the world, which is compatible with a great variety of changing performances. Nor is anything like universal agreement on "values" postulated by this idea of character. It postulates rather that the only thing given for a human being is his capacity to

Basil Blackwell

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Up to now, I have always felt William to be one of the classic creations of children's literature, certainly remembered with great affection from my own childhood. I used to be a little puzzled by the very 1920s style of his life — by the fact that the Brown family had a maid and other staff, and that not only William's father but his brother Robert always wore a hat, and by the flapperish style of William's sister Ethel's dresses as pictured in Thomas Henry's illustrations. But the world created by Richmal Crompton seemed to me essentially timeless, with its marvellous gallery of comic grotesques, both adult and child; best of all, Violet Bunt, lipping daughter of Mr Bott of Bott's Digestive Sauce: "My fatherth rich", she said. "I oughter be firth hecauth my fatherth rich."

And of course William has a fine pedigree. He is a direct descendant, if not of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, then of a whole clutch of Bad Boys who delighted American readers during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as they emerged from the pens of such authors as Thomas Bailey Aldridge (*The Story of a Bad Boy*) and George Wilbur Peck (*Peck's Bad Boy and his Pa*). There is also a good deal of P. G. Wodehouse in his blood, at least during the finer moments of Richmal Crompton's narrative:

The Fates were closing round him. He was aware that he would soon be in a bit of a fix. The horrible thing demanded of him. Sorrowfully and reluctantly he bowed to the inevitable. This is when William is asked to take a baby for an airing in his pram.

Now that he appears in bright red covers clearly aimed at the young consumer, I am not quite so sure that William is timeless. In fact he began life in stories written for a women's magazine during the First World War, and he only became fodder for children's books (a decade or so later) when Richmal Crompton had had to give up her teaching job after contracting poliomyelitis, and needed to make a living from writing. Perhaps this is why the stories — or at least the early ones, to which these four reissued volumes belong — have the smell of comic writing about children rather than for them.

William was feeling embittered with life in general. He was passing through one of his not infrequent periods of unpopularity. The climax had come with the gift of a skipping stone on him by a friend, and who hoped thus to purchase his goodwill. With the skipping he had bought a balloon adorned with the legs and head of a duck fastened in cardboard. The diction has the slight over-poisonosity of a grown-up writing with self-conscious condescension about childish things. This in itself would not irritate, but Crompton aspires to Wodehouse's extraordinary skill with language. Her prose rhythms are usually lumpy.

Nor does she have Wodehouse's dexterity with plot. The William series gets a lot better as it goes on, but in these early books the storyline is usually a very pedestrian affair. William goes to the cinema, sees a whole clutch of films (this presumably is around 1920), and comes back determined to put into practice everything romantic, adventurous and criminal that he has seen on the screen. The results are predictable, and the story concludes lamely with a burst of uncomprehending parental wrath. "William and Photography", in *William the Fourth*, begins more promisingly, with the hero obliged to go to tea with his godmother, and finding himself "trapped in a huge and horrible drawing-room, by a huge and horrible woman". In Thomas Henry's illustration she looks a true Aunt Agatha. But whereas Bertie Wooster would soon have entangled himself in all kinds of embarrassments and complications, William simply passes the time by drawing moustaches and beards on the portraits in the gorgon's photograph album — and, alas, the misdeed is not discovered until long after his departure.

Perhaps I am being unfair. I certainly derived enormous pleasure at about the age of eleven from William's ludicrous adventures with his gallant Outlaws; no doubt some children might do the same today. But much in the William books that twenty-five years ago merely seemed a bit antique would now, I should think, be almost beyond the ready comprehension of children — references to larders and butter's pantries and At Homes, silent films and visiting cards, Bolshevik societies, photographers' studios with velvet drapes, liquorice water. And while things like this, or their equivalent, deserve helpful explanations for child readers, the book is *Huckleberry Finn* or something of the same standard. William does not really merit the effort.

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Son of steam

Russell Davies

CHRISTOPHER AWDRY
Really Useful Engines
62pp. Kaye and Ward. £1.50.
Illustrated by Clive Spang
07182 08471

Liking the Reverend W. Awdry's Railway books has always been a question of gratitude for small mercies. Consider the nightly assault-course of parental bedtime reading which traverses such infamous swamps as *The Cat in the Hat* by the abominable Dr Seuss, not to mention the stressful angle-burgle of the strop and strife-prone Noddy. With these alternatives in mind one might call the oeuvre of Awdry not just tolerable but positively welcoming.

The hardback price has reached thirty bob in the prehistoric money, but the format is the same: stories of a few pages' length for short-haul reading, adding up to a volume that it would not be too dreadful to reiterate at one go. The advantages of the hardback should not, in this case, be underestimated. Along with the boards comes a sturdily shiny surface, from which the regrettable effluents, secretions and spillages of childhood may be smartly wiped. The illusion of hygiene is quite easy to maintain.

Collectors will note that this is No 27 in the series. Those of a more literary cast of mind will observe that a different author is involved. The Rev W. has handed over the token, as we branch-line folk say, to his son Christopher, who is now writing Engine stories for the bedtime benefit of his own son Richard. Apart from being a laudable progression in itself, this familial patterning does much to revive the claims of those dynastic theories of children's literature which the morose Christopher Robin Milne has been at pains to dismantle.

To say that Christopher Awdry has avoided the worst excesses of his father would be to give, perhaps, a wrong impression of the senior man. Better to say that his successor has avoided wheeling on the tiresome Donald and Douglas with their unpronounceable phonetic Scots dialect, which comes to the same thing. The cast — Thomas, Percy, Henry, Duck and Gordon — is familiar and traditional. We find ourselves, as ever, on the Fat and Thin Controller's railway, sited on the Island of Sodor. A map confirms — for the first time in my experience — that we are indeed dealing with the missing part of the bishopric of Sodor and Man. Barrow-in-Furness lies to the East, the Isle of Man to the West; though Edwards, the map-maker, takes the responsibilities of fletive inventiveness rather too seriously when he places the town of Douglas in exactly the spot where Ramsey ought to be.

The first story is by no means the best. It suffers from the preoccupation of all modern popular fiction with crime. Not even an anthropomorphized railway-engine can qualify as a hero nowadays unless he is capable of capturing burglars. On this occasion, the nocturnal malefactors seem to have waited chillingly till dawn before making their escape



An illustration by C. Reginald Dalby from *Task Engine Thomas Again*.

down the only available road in a very slow car (but fast enough, no doubt, for its day). Clive Spang's illustrations return us to the Dinky Toy world of the mid-1960s, where even the Fat Controller looks just about possible, if still improbable, in his tailcoat, top-hat and spats. Spang restored something of the cardboard simplicity of the original illustrator, C. Reginald Dalby, though nobody will ever get it right again.

Other chapters bring us the usual run of minor collisions and emergency procedures, climaxing in a "triple-header" where Percy, Thomas and Duck are required to haul the express together. In the days of real steam traction this rarely happened, but bizarre last-minute couplings of two inappropriate engines were frequent; the sense of strain was unmistakable as the personalities of the engines rebelled against each other, and against the unfamiliarity of the task as a whole. With the steam locomotive, men came as close as they possibly ever will to the invention of a beast-snuffling, snorting, thundering, yet herbivorous at heart. The English attachment to steam traction is merely the domestic livestock system placed on a public and industrial footing, or wheelfbase.

And somehow, strangely, children who have never seen steam-haulage, except perhaps at a sideshow, still comprehend what manner of creature this is. Neither the imputation of moral qualities to these machines, nor the subsequent inference of Judeo-Awdryan moral lessons from their vicissitudes, seems to present the slightest problem to young listeners, even today. The morals themselves are of a perfectly acceptable kind: "persevere, and do not become grumpy when frustrated" is the useful pre-school message they repeatedly preach. The new Mr Awdry is unlikely to extend this pedagogy very far into the fashionable realms of public policy. We have already had "Enterprising Engines", but I doubt that we shall ever see "Cost-Efficient Engines", much less "Mile-gic the Siege-Engine" and the like.

But while we're about it, there is one respect in which a cleansing of the Awdryan stable might be in order: namely in the sexing of the locos. Commonly thought of as female in their real-life heyday, they appear in these books exclusively as males, while the female gender is represented by recalcitrant trucks and carriages whose mission in life is to complain. The new Mr Awdry would do well to correct this imbalance, lest the stationmistress — or even the Slim Controllerette — should blow the whistle on him.

DAVID LOWE

Turgenev's Fathers and Sons
10pp. Ann Arbor: Ardis. \$17.50
(paperback, \$5).

08231 6932
DAVID LOWE (Editor)
Turgenev Letters
Volume One: 268pp.
Volume Two: 226pp.
Ann Arbor: Ardis. \$50
08231 7351 and 08233 736 X

A.V. KNOWLES (Editor and Translator)
Turgenev's Letters
20pp. Athlone. £16.
04512108

Painters and writers who operate on a vast scale are inevitably the most impressive creators; they are not necessarily always the more accomplished artists. Anthony Powell's *A Hero of Our Time*, by Lermontov; but it would just as well be applied to the works of Turgenev, in the perennial comparison with his more grandiose contemporaries, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. It is a comparison from which he is beginning to benefit. A hundred years ago, discriminating Europeans placed Turgenev first among the Russian novelists; perhaps the time has come to restore him to that rank today. His stories, plays and novels may be read time and again and still display new beauties, new proofs of a fine, poetical imagination. His is no vast historical canvas, no poem of religious and philosophical ideas, no psychodrama of depravity or criminality. Turgenev is concerned with the most fundamental of truths: the fragility of every man and woman in the face of life and death. Whether the outcome is tragic or triumphant, the theme never fails.

Over the past two decades, Turgenev has been finding many powerful advocates. In France, the work of Henri Granjard and Alexandre Ziguilsky brought a more meticulous, biographical basis to criticism of his work. In England, Richard Freeborn and the late Leonard Schapiro have adopted respectively the most rigorous literary and historical criteria in assessing his masterpieces, while April Fitz-Lyon has exhaustively explored his debt to Pauline Viardot. In Russia itself, the activity of the late M.P. Alekseyev culminated in the first and solitary text of the complete works and, in a second edition. With this latest edition of *Fathers and Sons*, David Lowe joins their company. There are drawbacks, to be sure. The book is short, trends into selected aspects of the novel's scope and background, and contains an innocuously large amount of filigree. It is based on a thesis published several years ago, incorporates (in places, verbatim) articles previously published

Dramas of fragility

Patrick Waddington

DAVID LOWE

Turgenev's Fathers and Sons
10pp. Ann Arbor: Ardis. \$17.50
(paperback, \$5).

One of the most helpful of many comparisons is with the cinema: Turgenev's juxtaposition of scenes and individual shots is described in terms of Eisenstein's principle of montage. The analogy is not new, and may also be applied to *Phantoms*, or even to *A Nest of the Gentry* with its flashbacks and its timeless episodes; but it is forcefully expressed and reminds one of Turgenev's own avowed interest, about the time of writing *Fathers and Sons*, in dioramas and dissolving views. Another notion of considerable benefit (borrowed from Northrop Frye) is that of "blocking" figures in the drama. In a comedy by Molière, for example, the aversion or affection of a father blocks the aspirations of his children. In *Fathers and Sons* this role is taken by the uncle, Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov, and also, more curiously, by Bazarov. As in Molière, the happy marriages that they block for a time come inevitably at the last.

In general, Lowe is at his best and most stimulating in the treatment of these "strong" characters. He groups them together and argues that their mutual and mounting enmity, resulting in a duel, derives more from their similarities than from their differences. He contrasts the unadmirable "blockers" with their "appealingly average" opposites and temporary victims, Nikolay Petrovich and his son Arkady. These he assumes to be more to Turgenev's own taste, reflecting as they seem to do his own personality and values. To view the four principal characters in this light is, however, unconventional and cannot be squared with Turgenev's declared intentions.

Lowe is very well aware of the fact. He relies on what he thinks he reads in the finished novel and argues that one must disregard the intentions of a man who "made so many contradictory statements about *Fathers and Sons* that in the last analysis it is difficult to believe anything that he said about it". Thus he contests Turgenev's claim to have meant Bazarov to be a revolutionary, to have shared most of his convictions, and to have wanted to show up through him the gentry's flabbiness and limitations as the leading class in Russian society.

But bad Lowe not opposed his chosen pairs so rigidly, he might have discerned more of Turgenev in both, and had he rather contrasted the "fathers" and the "sons", he could have seen all four as aspects of their creator. In either case, he would have recognized at least in part the validity of Turgenev's expressed aims.

For a start, if Turgenev is obviously present in Nikolay Petrovich — in his manners and good breeding, his love of music and nature, his well-intentioned mismanagement of his farm, even in his keeping of a servant-mistress — he is almost equally to be seen in Pavel. Now a lonely, ageing bachelor, disputatious, Westernized, well-groomed, Pavel shared with Turgenev around 1860-62 the memory of a (as it then seemed) hopeless love. The parallel between the elder Kirsanov's relations with Nelly R. and Turgenev's own with Pauline Viardot has often been noted, but is far more striking than is usually supposed. Pavel re-enacts — albeit in a different order — the years Turgenev spent in pursuit of a woman with



divided loyalties and an impulsive nature; the wasted years of his early maturity; the brief reconciliation with Viardot at Courmayeur in 1856; and the realization, around 1860 (as he understood things then), that her love for him was gone. Her perplexing blend of passion and reserve is clearly rendered, as is also her peculiar "betrayal" of both Turgenev and her husband, Loula, in a passionate but exclusively epistolary relationship with Julius Rietz, a staid and bewildered composer and conductor. What is most interesting is the way in which Turgenev makes the younger generation judge his own and Pavel's past. For Arkady, Pavel deserves only pity: having lost his love, he has lost life altogether. For the merciless Bazarov, on the other hand, a man who stakes everything on a woman's love is not a man at all. One feels that this is also Turgenev's own opinion; and although in a sense he gets his own back on Bazarov, by making him fall helplessly in love with another Nelly R. — Anna Odintsova — he clearly respects him and listens to his advice. It is well known that during the composition of *Fathers and Sons* Turgenev kept a diary for Bazarov and set down his views on every matter that cropped up. That document is lost; but one guesses that many of its passages were introduced direct into the novel. Some corroboration of this may be seen in the extant notes for *Fathers and Sons*, as also in Turgenev's letters of the period. He commented, for example, to the poet Fet, with whom he often had wrangles of the sort he must have been experiencing with the as yet incorporeal Bazarov: "To judge by the reactions of the so-called young critics, it is time for me to retire from literature. You and I have been consigned to the company of worthy retired majors. What can we do, old chap? It's time to make way for the young. But where are our successors? Where?" In Chapter 10 of the novel this opinion is echoed in Nikolay and Pavel's discussion of the role of older men in relation to the nihilist philosophy of the young. At one point Nikolay concludes: "So you and I have been consigned to the company of the retired; our song is sung." And later on Pavel, having just had another furious argument with Bazarov,

cries out in desperation: "So this then is the youth of today! It is these men who are our successors!"

We see here the age-old clash of generations, of which Lowe perhaps takes insufficient note; but we also see that, while Turgenev does not find the young as yet more adequate than the old, he accepts that the fathers are finished. This is Bazarov's main claim. Moreover, he clearly considers that Bazarov, though born before his time, may hold the only future for his country. To marry into the peasantry and talk of land reform, like Nikolay, is ultimately comic and too mild. To marry a gentlewoman and build a country nest, like Arkady, is a complete negation of progressive principles. These deceptively happy, "Tolstoyan" solutions are in fact no more satisfying to Turgenev than Pavel's discreet retirement to Germany, a wicked parody of the course he himself would take.

Bazarov alone stands at the gateway to a new world, as yet unknown, a world which his creator feared to enter. Dostoevsky entered it, in *The Devils*, but got it wrong. Bazarov is not the apostle of violence only, but of reconstruction. He is the embryo of Lenin. Lowe would dispute this, on the ground that it is not in the novel. He claims that Bazarov should be thought of as a rebel without a cause. That is surely correct, as far as it goes: Bazarov stands in a line which leads from the Romantic hero to the modern outsider. But this is already to acknowledge something which is extra-textual. In fact, a work of literature is not only a text but all one knows about it. In Bazarov one has a permanent type, like Hamlet, a poetic creation of enormous resonance and far-reaching effects. His significance for the Soviet Union today has perhaps been best understood by Sir Issai Berlin, but Robert Boothby had already noted in *I Fight to Live*: "It is absurd to say that Communism has been imposed on Russia from without, when, in the year 1862, the character of Lenin was etched and his aims exposed by a great Russian writer with a hand that never faltered."

David Lowe may well be right to contend that *Fathers and Sons* is Turgenev's greatest work. Certainly its author himself allowed this towards the end of his career, ranking it above even his beloved *Sportsman's Sketches*. But it is hard to recollect Lowe's manifest enthusiasm for the novel with his statement to the introduction to *Turgenev's Letters*: "By and large, the vast body of Turgenev's prose fiction, not to mention his poetry and dramatic compositions, strikes us as singularly dated. The poetic sensibility at work in Turgenev's tales of destructive passion evokes ennui in the modern reader." Can one take seriously the assumption here that Turgenev is a *homo vietus* libri, that *Fathers and Sons* is somehow a glorious fluke? The assertion must surely be due to carelessness: Lowe cannot have examined the rest with the almost loving concern which went into his study of the novel. Wherever you place Turgenev in the pantheon of writers, you can scarcely deny to *Bezhin Meadow*, or *The Singers*, or *First Love*, or *A Month in the Country*, or *A Nest of the Gentry*, or *Spring Floods* that same magic which transforms the rather ordinary material of *Fathers and Sons* into a fine and memorable creation.

But what of the edition of the correspondence, and the rival version by A. V. Knowles? In the first place, one should say that there already exists a perfectly serviceable selection of Turgenev's letters translated into English and edited with an excellent short introduction by Edmond H. Lehman. Published by Knopf in 1961, it contains extracts of varying lengths from 425 letters, together with illustrations including a sample of Turgenev's hand. By contrast the two new editions, though nicely printed and presented, are unillustrated and offer only 236 letters (Knowles) and 334 letters (Lowe). Admittedly, both give the texts practically in full; but this has disadvantages as well as advantages, since without the context of previous letters, replies, or adequate notes very many of Turgenev's remarks and allusions have little interest. As getting on for 7,000 published items were available for selection, and as a large number of Lehman's choices are taken up again, one wonders if it would not have been wiser to produce English editions of Turgenev's correspondence with particular

Once upon a time

T. A. Shippey

ROBERT NYE
Three Tales: Beowulf, Talliesin, Wishing Gold
258pp. Hamish Hamilton. A6.50.
024111989

Robert Nye's *Three Tales* sound rather like an anecdotal collection: "once upon a time" there was an English tale, a Welsh tale, and an Irish tale. One's impulse to see in them different national stereotypes must have been predicted, cannot be resisted, and seems in the end justified. The Irish tale of "Wishing Gold" for one thing, exudes an entirely familiar air of ceremonial hierarchy bordering on anarchy from the moment the characters start speaking.

"King," said the old man, "it's a wonder to me that a great person like yourself is not sitting on a throne, and that you are here, talking to me like a common man." "Why should I be sitting on a throne?" said the king. "Why should I be sitting on a throne?" said the king. "Why should I be sitting on a throne?" said the king.

He is talked into it just the same, finds himself stranded eating kippers on Alone Island, begets a child on the Queen there, and off will start the story, full of dreadful threats ("I will strangle you in your own mistletoe", to a druid) and desperate rescues ("Oh no", from Wishing Gold himself, asked by his mother to visit Ireland for the third time, "I've had enough of that country").

The Welsh tale of "Talliesin", by contrast, is full of poetic vision, witchcraft, metamorphosis and vulgar comedy — Talliesin defeats the great Heulin Vard in the bardic contest before King Maelgwyn by causing him to emit rude noises instead of striking stilles; and metaphors (borrowed from the works of classical authors). And the English tale, one has to admit, is worthy, dutiful and boring. It is yet another variation of "Beowulf", which may have made Robert Nye's job impossible from the start: the great, though the poem is it has

never been anything but hopelessly broken-backed as a story. However it also seems to have led its most recent redactor in two different directions at the same time: one, to beef up the horrific element by re-imagining Grendel, his mother, the mere and the dragon; two, to make its already indecently virtuous hero even more so by making him nicer, smaller, more modest and more didactic as well. Nye's Beowulf has toothache, and finds sermons, if not in running brooks, certainly in green apples. "I think Beowulf is trying to show us that in order to overcome evil we have to admit to a little bit of it in ourselves."

I preferred the old Beowulf, who thought the way to overcome evil was to spring his sinews and break its bonehouse, but Nye is writing an interpretation for moderns, not a translation, so that the new view may be well enough. Admittedly the idea that monsters tell us something about men was there from the beginning. Should the rationalizing urge of

modern expansive narrative be taken all the way through to allegory, though? I feel sure that this "Beowulf" (again like the original) is saying something about politics, possibly that bourgeois amelioration is better than an inch for utopias. "Talliesin" could be seen likewise as a fable about soothsayers, their unpopularity and necessity at the courts of princes (and by extension at the courts of modern prime ministers). And on that view there might even be something pointed about "Wishing Gold" as well, in which the King of Ireland and his son both stamp off in the end with their respective hides to Alone Island and the country of the Moving Wheel, leaving their native land to be governed by a faithless queen and her three false murderous sons. All that is her three false murderous sons. All that is her three false murderous sons. All that is her three false murderous sons.

Sorel Point

The rocks, of child's red plasticine,
Blisters the sea's strong glass. A pair
Of gulls switch back on curving air.
Thin water yeasts the faultless sand.
Dressed for the day and Sunday-clean
The quarry's hurt, salt-washed and dried,
Spills its neat gut down the cliff-side.
In whitest white and blackest black
The shore-light turns its iron back
On the small sureness where we stand.

Hand on the rail, I lean down to
The almost out-of-earshot bay;
The taut horizon's silver-grey
Disavowance of blue and blue.
I turn to you, but you are gone
Up the hung path of whitened stone
To where your wife and children wait.
Now dispossessed of the great sea
A stranded tide snakes under me,
Translate, I hear you say. Translate.

CHARLES CAUSLEY

friends, say Pauline Viardot, Annenkov, Fet, Polonsky or Countess Lambert, rather than attempting to repeat a representative cross-section.

This having been said, both new collections are thoroughly enjoyable. How could they be otherwise? Turgenev was a natural master of the epistolary art, in half a dozen languages. He rarely wrote with publication in view, with the result that only occasional passages have the polished elegance of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Nor are his letters always quite so coherent. They nevertheless show a spontaneity, charm, wisdom and good humour seldom seen in his works and thus reveal to the eavesdropping reader a more subjective and candid Turgenev. They tell us his fads and pet hates, talk of love and lust, survey his physical and moral sufferings. Some, especially those to Pauline Viardot, summarize his daily activity and take the place of his lost diaries. Others are polemical, whether on literature, art, music, politics, philosophy or religion. Most of this comes across well enough in these two selections and is annotated with tact. If you like

notes to surround the items, you will take the Knowles; the Lowe has plain texts for those who prefer notes only for reference at the end. Otherwise, your choice may be bound by nationality: "I tore my trousers" or "I ripped my pants"; "You've made a fool of yourself, old man" or "Hey, brother, you made a boo-boo."

One of the most endearing features of Turgenev's letters is his generous attitude to those writers whom he had best cause to dislike. Dostoevsky had insulted him beyond measure, but in 1877 he wrote (in the translation by Lowe): "I am certain that you do not doubt that these misunderstandings could not have influence on my opinion of your first-class talent and the lofty position which you rightfully occupy in our literature." Turgenev had been profoundly humiliated by Tolstoy, but in 1874 declared to Fet (in the version by Knowles): "I can assure you that I have never said anything to anyone about Tolstoy without having the greatest respect for his talent and personality." Many other examples could be quoted in the same line. Likewise, Turgenev saw the good points of the Slavophiles whose

general stance he despised; admitted the value of religion despite his own agnosticism; supported the aims of revolutionaries while abhorring their methods. He could exhibit serious prejudice, it is true; but in most things he found room to change his mind. He was fundamentally an empirical man.

This is how Lowe describes Bazarov, and it is interesting to compare what Turgenev says about Bazarov in these letters with his commentator's analysis. It is hard to agree that Turgenev was wrong or muddle-headed. Here is the Lowe rendering of his famous remark to Shubevsky, which for the sake of space I abridge: "If the reader doesn't come to love Bazarov, with all his coarseness, callousness, pitiless dryness and harshness, then I have missed the mark. I imagined a gloomy, wild, large figure, half grown out of the soil, strong, spiteful, honest - doomed to perish because still in the anteroom of the future." Add to this what he had already told his publisher (in the Knowles translation): "In my opinion he is the real hero of our times." By this reference back to Lermontov, Turgenev placed Bazarov firm-

ly in the tradition of "superfluous people" who, by their frustration with repressive Russian rule, turned, some to idleness, some to eloquence, some to hate and some - as one appeared - to revolution. All failed, because all were born too soon. The sins of the fathers, besides, were visited upon the sons of the third and fourth generation.

At the end of Turgenev's novel, however, there is a message of hope. Much play has been made in the hook on Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff*, proposed by the young as an antidote to Pushkin. Its very title evokes that force and substance which (in the terms of a rejected epigraph) the sons and fathers must combine. Russia is to move forward. Now according to Büchner the traditional view of body and soul is all wrong. The soul is in fact mortal, because of this life only, while the body rejects the immortality of material existence. In crude terms, dead people help to push up the living. But those who have "come to love" Bazarov join his parents, and Turgenev, at the grave and hear the flowers speak of "eternal reconciliation and the life everlasting".

Dreams of self-sacrifice

Aileen Kelly

DONALD KENNEDY
Little Sparrow: A Portrait of Sophia Kovalevsky
341pp. Ohio University Press. £20.80 (paperback, £10.40).
0821406922
BARBARA ALPERN ENGEL
Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia
230pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.
0521251257

In 1889 a volume of recollections of a Russian childhood appeared in Stockholm. Republished in Russia the following year, the work showed considerable literary merit, but its success owed more to the identity of the author: Sophia Kovalevsky, one of the great mathematical prodigies of her century, and, as the first woman to hold a university chair, an international celebrity.

To her own age, Kovalevsky was a freak of nature. With hindsight she appears as one of those women whose achievements helped begin the slow erosion of the belief that sexual roles are biologically determined. But the recent interest in Kovalevsky reflects another, increasingly topical, concern: the cost in psychological terms to those who challenge socially determined patterns of existence.

On this question Sophia Kovalevsky has done much of the spadework for her biographers. As Beatrice Stillman observes in her excellent introduction to her translation of *A Russian Childhood* (Springer Verlag, 1978), Kovalevsky's account of her childhood and adolescence is no idealized vision of the past, but a sensitive charting of the gradual formation of a sense of identity through relationships with the family and the outside world. In mid-nineteenth-century Russia (Kovalevsky was born in 1850) such relationships were in an unprecedented state of flux. Traditional attitudes and patriarchal structures, shaken by the abolition of serfdom, were subjected to wholesale intellectual negation by a radical young generation inspired by an extraneous rationalist faith in science as the key to social progress. The revolt of gentry children against their parents was a familiar phenomenon, and the two daughters of General Korvin-Krukovsky, on their remote country estate were no exception.

Sophia first heard of the new "nihilism", its belief in the equality of the sexes and its campaign for women's higher education, from her elder sister, to whom the new ideas offered release from boredom and the chance to develop her literary talent. To Sophia intellectual achievement seemed the answer to a more fundamental need: recognition by others of her personal worth. She relates that from her earliest awareness she had suffered from a sense of being undervalued. Her interest in mathematics (for which her extraordinary ability appeared at a very early age) is touched on only in passing.

to the child Sophia her intellectual gifts were above all the means of securing, if not the affection, at least the attention of others. Her recollections close with the description of her sister's relationship with Dostoevsky, who had encouraged her literary talent and subsequently fallen in love with her. The thirteen-year-old Sophia, herself infatuated with Dostoevsky, was incredulous when her sister did not return his love. "What happiness it would be to be with him constantly and submit yourself to him utterly! How could my sister give such happiness away?"

Kovalevsky wrote no sequel to *A Russian Childhood*; but there is ample evidence that the desire to lose herself in another person remained as strong in her as the drive to intellectual fulfilment and personal autonomy. At first it seemed that the conflict between the two could be resolved through the sublimation of her need for love in the self-sacrificial comradeship of the nihilist student circles in which she moved after her father allowed her to take private lessons in mathematics in Petersburg (Russian universities were still closed to women). Her letters at this period ecstatically look forward to a "heavenly life" of ascetic study and work for the nihilist ideal of universal enlightenment. To secure a passport to study abroad, she resorted to the popular stratagem of a fictitious marriage to a man sympathetic to the women's cause. In Berlin, although women were barred from the university, her brilliance so impressed the distinguished mathematician Weierstrass that he became her lifelong mentor and collaborator. In 1874 the University of Göttingen took the unprecedented step of awarding her a doctorate *summa cum laude* without examination, on the strength of three original works. The French Academy of Sciences subsequently awarded her the prestigious Prix Bordin for her work on the solution of a long-standing problem in applied mathematics: the motion of a heavy solid rotating round a fixed point; and the Russian Academy of Sciences elected her a corresponding member. But her international distinction could not win her the university post she sought in France or Russia (although the Russian government paid her the backhanded compliment of refusing her request to renounce her citizenship on the grounds that she was "the pride of Russia"). In 1884 she accepted a chair at Stockholm University, where she remained until her death at the age of forty-one.

Here was not a narrowly gifted nature. The literary talent so evident in her memoir was expressed in journalism on a broad range of subjects and in fiction which included a semi-autobiographical novel, *A Nihilist Girl*. She had a gift for friendship and great personal charm. Her unassuming manner and childlike directness deflected the hostility of conservative academics and probably contributed as much as her scholarly achievements to the cause of women's education, to which she remained committed throughout her life.

Yet for all these richness, the multiple

grated. It is significant that when after six years she transformed her nihilist marriage into a real one, for another six years (during which a daughter was born) she interrupted her career to devote herself to the role of wife and mother and the social life of Petersburg. Whether or not this can be attributed, as feminists might suggest, to a "fear of success", her life appears as a succession of conflicts between the claims of love and work. With her husband she alternated between jealous defence of her autonomy and a jealously clinging dependence. Her ability to absorb herself entirely in her work enabled her to cope with the tragedy of his suicide, but it never compensated for her profound loneliness. Her last years were clouded by a futile and humiliating search for emotional security in a relationship with a man who was the great love of her life. The rival claims of this relationship and her work for the Prix Bordin drove her to exhaustion. Her brilliant success in the second of the two enterprises was less important to her than the failure in the first. Her friends noted how a sorrowful depression followed each achievement, as if the intellectual goals to which she compulsively strove proved on attainment not worth the effort. As she wrote to a friend after another failure to secure emotional commitment from a man: "Such is life: in everything one gets not what one desires, what one considers essential: everything, but not that."

With her Russian talent for introspection, Kovalevsky has left abundant material for speculation on the social and psychological reasons for her extraordinary drive to achievement and her equally remarkable sense of failure. The main merit of Donald Kennedy's biography lies in its copious quotations from the material; but where Kovalevsky does not speak for herself, the book is trivial and shallow, largely because it is intellectually inadequate to its subject. Neither, it seems, a linguist, nor a scientist, nor a historian (he relates that his interest in Kovalevsky was aroused by the family reminiscences of his wife, a distant relation of his subject), the author reveals his ignorance in all three areas by frequent misspellings of names (for example, the Victorian scientist Thomas Huxley appears as Gekali - evidently a transmutation from a Russian source), and much else. Equally spectacular evidence that the author is well out of his depth can be found in his treatment of the climate of ideas which shaped Kovalevsky's aspirations - for example, the assertion that nihilism (as popularized by Turgenev in *Fathers and Sons*) can be defined as "the negation of differences between the sexes as far as biologically possible". His incomprehension of the scope of the radical ideology of the 1860s is a disastrous weakness in the book; for the personal conflicts as well as the achievements of the women intellectuals of that generation had much to do with the pretensions of the nihilist movement to restructure all areas of life on rational principles.

This is one of the main arguments in *Mothers and Daughters*, which explores the relationship

between the campaign for women's emancipation in mid-nineteenth-century Russia and the wider radical movement. Nihilism gave enormous encouragement to the cause of higher education for women, but its contempt for the emotions (based partly on a primitive materialism, partly on social altruism) proved a major obstacle to women's autonomy. While common for individual liberty led Russian radicals to preach total sexual freedom, they tended to practise an ascetic subordination of personal to social concerns, in which women (for whom in any case sexual freedom without contraception was a way back to the bondage of the past) were more fervent than men. As Barbara Engel perceptively remarks, rather than re-evaluate their personal relationships, they played them down as obstacles to larger goals, a tendency taken to its extreme by those women who abandoned their hopes of intellectual fulfilment to participate in the revolutionary movement. The self-sacrifice of the women terrorists of the 1870s, who denied themselves all personal satisfaction, including, in many cases, sexual love, was legendary.

But despising emotions did not eliminate them; as Engel shows, women who, like Kovalevsky, pursued their goal of autonomy seemed unable to resolve the conflicts between freedom and commitment, demonstrating through their predicament the inadequacy of nihilism as a liberating philosophy.

The exceptional dedication of women to that philosophy has never been adequately explained; unfortunately Engel's attempt to do so is the weakest part of her book. She suggests that it derived from religiously based and culturally "feminine" values of heroic self-abnegation absorbed within the family. But she produces no real evidence that the much more probable assumption that the source of these values was what she refers to as the "general culture" of the Russian intelligentsia. The cult of martyrdom central to this culture was moulded by a succession of models: the early Christian martyrs, the heroes of Schiller's political dramas, the Decembrists and the persecuted Russian sects - to name a few. But fewer still get even a cursory mention in this book. Barbara Engel's unconscious emphasis on the role of "feminine" values in Russian radical culture leads her to beg the question of why the moral asceticism required by the predominantly masculine movement of the intelligentsia were adhered to by women more fervently by women than by men. Nonetheless, her book goes some way towards defining the price these women had to pay for their commitment.

The current issue of the *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (286pp., 0028-8683, NZ\$ 12) is devoted to Ivo Sergeevich Turgenev (1818-1883). Edited by Patrick Waddington, it contains articles on aspects of Turgenev's life and work by Judith Armstrong, Boris Christy, Robert Frébourg, Nicholas G. Zerkov, J. A. H. Murphy, and by Waddington himself.

Images of intensity

Lachlan Mackinnon

M. L. ROSENTHAL and SALLY M. GALL
The Modern Poetic Sequence: The Genius of Modern Poetry
580pp. Oxford University Press. £26.
0195031709

M. L. ROSENTHAL
Poetry and the Common Life
148pp. New York: Schocken. \$15 (paperback, \$6.95).
0805238514

"The modern sequence is the decisive form toward which all the developments of modern poetry have tended", M. L. Rosenthal and Sally M. Gall claim. They set out to establish "a poet's poetics" with which to approach a form whose "development was always implicit in the nature of poetic structure", and to test that approach against a very wide range of material (roughly fifty poets are discussed, often in great detail).

The poetics for which Rosenthal and Gall argue focuses on the way in which sequences are structured round moments or images of intense feeling. The authors are opposed to both biographical and ideological methods of reading, seeking instead the internal dynamics of the sequence. The form begins, we are told, with Whitman and Emily Dickinson's fascicles; Tennyson's "Maud" is seen as a failed groping towards it, unsatisfactory because factitiously disciplined by plot and character. The modern sequence tries to realize in as open a way as possible the conditions under which we live, and uses an emotional pattern of organization, because modern poets are not content with traditional patterns.

Although claiming to establish a genre, the authors have a loose way with history. They admit to having "oversimplified" a comparison between Pound and Yeats in order to avoid a detailed discussion of influence, yet suggest

without evidence that Geoffrey Hill may have adapted the line of *Mercian Hymns* from a line in Olson. They pay no attention to *Les Fleurs du mal*, whose structuring may be too schematic for it to count as a "sequence" but which should none the less have been considered, if only because of its influence; and they suppose a reader of such ignorance that he "will have to come to terms with Hardy's 'old-fashioned' style", because it is so unlike the language to which he is presumably used.

The lack of historical accuracy is a consequence of the theoretical hokum on which much of the book is based. The poetics it sets out with is old-fashioned Symbolist, as indicated when the authors say of the sequence that "the task of sustaining such a structure with the necessary rigor is a difficult one, imperfectly understood by many poets, and even the greatest can lapse into discourse when something like a hard, gemlike flame is needed". They have taken to heart Poe's remarks on the difficulty of long poems (that they are necessarily uneven in intensity) and see the sequence as the triumphant answer to them, but for all their mistrust of the discursive, the ideological and the narrative, most of the poems Rosenthal and Gall discuss draw on precisely those areas.

This can lead to some very odd readings: a discussion of Auden's "Horae Canonicae" which omits Good Friday seems a little off-centre, for instance, and the fact that *Life Studies* tells a story is played down. There are, however, some extremely interesting passages on Pound (whose work is ideally suited to this sort of reading), particularly a remarkable brief exposition of his visionary and water imagery. The extent to which the theory can accommodate the modernist long poem or sequence betrays its origins while showing its usefulness, but its limited applicability leads the authors either to patronize their subjects, or into a curmudgeonliness (as with the "sick-

ening redundancies and self-echoings" of *Ash Wednesday*) that is unsympathetic even where it commands assent, which it can hardly do in the case of the example quoted.

The book becomes worse the closer to the present it gets. Dealing with Irish poetry, for instance, it finds room for Austin Clarke, John Montague and Thomas Kinsella, but only a brief, cryptic glance at Heaney's "Glanmore Sonnets" and not a word for *North*. The pull towards discursive writing in American poetry - as for example, with James Merrill - goes unremarked except for a couple of swipes at John Ashbery for being tedious, and the renewed importance of narrative in British poetry is missed altogether. *North* would have been a particularly useful test case for the turn away from movement through feeling towards movement through a given order, as demonstrated in the shift from the meditative first part of that book to the more journalistic second and the way that shift embodies the impact of history.

Todeed, although the blurb asserts that *The Modern Poetic Sequence* is "revolutionary", a claim derived from the authors' insistence that what they are showing has never been seen before, the book comes up with a very traditional story. In Whitman and Dickinson there are movements towards the inclusiveness and fragmentation of the modern sensibility. These movements culminate in the work of Yeats, Eliot, Pound and Williams, after which there is a falling off through Stevens and Auden, redeemed almost solely by Lowell, Masters, Henley, Housman, Bunting, Hill and others are brought in under different rubrics, and the sequence is seen as dividing its attention between regionalism in one direction and psychological pressures in another, but no real explanation for this is given.

This book can easily be read, then, as a last belated of the dinosaur modernism, and as such it is extremely disappointing. It fails to give any

but the most hazy account of the development of the modern mind on whose uniqueness it insists; it is unlikely to rearrange our view of literary history; and the fact that loosely or emotionally articulated sequences for some decades replaced the long poem has not gone wholly unremarked.

However, the failings of the book's organization tell only half the story. The other half is that it exemplifies many of the virtues for which M. L. Rosenthal has deservedly been praised in the past, virtues which the welcome reissue of *Poetry and the Common Life* reminds us of more forcibly. Rosenthal is an excellent teacher by example: his *The Modern Poets* (1960) and *The New Poets* (1967) helped many young readers to orient themselves when setting out, and opened unexpected doors. *Poetry and the Common Life* is Rosenthal unencumbered by history, theory or professorial seriousness. It is amiable, drifting and plangent as it talks about how poetry comes from and deals with the elements of every day. What Rosenthal conveys most forcibly is the sense of how much and how urgently poetry matters. *The Modern Poetic Sequence* provides, characteristically, a good deal of useful textual information on Dickinson, Yeats and Plath garnered from scattered sources, but more importantly it gives praise. Rosenthal makes us want to read or reread the poets he talks about; he is by any standard unusually adept at finding the interesting or tantalizing quotation; he is also a master of the provocative generalization and the passionate assertion. There is a sad ambition to be encyclopedic and definitive in *The Modern Poetic Sequence* which sometimes falsifies these gifts.

But if the assertive tone of *The Modern Poetic Sequence* roars us want to quarrel, it also makes us think. It brings to mind poets - Henley, for instance - who are perhaps not always there, and in a way which reminds us that they also matter, if less so than the eclipsing greats.

Dissolving the voice

Colin MacCabe

JOAN RAWORTH
Writing
Berkeley, California: The Figures Press. \$6.
080724125

It is depressing, but not surprising, that this magnificent poem, finished in 1977, has had to wait five years for a publisher. In an England which has given itself over to the seductions of conservatism, Raworth's poetry strikes the wrong tone; so wrong that, even now, the poem appears in the lists of an American Press.

The title, *Writing*, is straightforwardly descriptive of the subject-matter; the poem investigates the processes of writing - how the transcription of experience and memory can offer new perspectives, or, more radically, liberation from perspective. Much of the poem turns on an opposition between the voice, which constantly places the self, and writing, which offers the possibility of a continuous source of these values was what she refers to as the "general culture" of the Russian intelligentsia. The cult of martyrdom central to this culture was moulded by a succession of models: the early Christian martyrs, the heroes of Schiller's political dramas, the Decembrists and the persecuted Russian sects - to name a few. But fewer still get even a cursory mention in this book. Barbara Engel's unconscious emphasis on the role of "feminine" values in Russian radical culture leads her to beg the question of why the moral asceticism required by the predominantly masculine movement of the intelligentsia were adhered to by women more fervently by women than by men. Nonetheless, her book goes some way towards defining the price these women had to pay for their commitment.

As the poem is writing, the immediate world dissolves into a hierarchy of elements: "the voice serves as an emblem for the personal, for it dissolves the unity of the personal into differentiated bands of sound."

At the point of writing, the immediate world dissolves into a hierarchy of elements: "the voice serves as an emblem for the personal, for it dissolves the unity of the personal into differentiated bands of sound."

Writing offers an escape from the order imposed by the organs of speech and vision. The poem is a writer's commitment to social identities, to the way we see ourselves and the way we are seen by others. It is a commitment to the way we see ourselves and the way we are seen by others. It is a commitment to the way we see ourselves and the way we are seen by others.

writing offers the possibility of unfreezing the frame, of cutting across the certainties of eye and larynx.

Raworth's minimal line, with rarely more than four words and little punctuation, is crucially important to this process. It produces a multiple syntax which refuses certainty and allows for a whole variety of voices to fade in and out of the poem as though one were listening to a multiply tuned radio: "prints / voice / prints / not / identity / comrade / in a plg's eye"; the play between the verbal and substantial forms of voice and *prints* both enacts the way in which we equate speech and writing, and yet insists on their difference.

The poem refuses context in favour of text, familiar continuity in favour of fresh juxtapositions. It is possible to place Raworth within a variety of poetic traditions, but by so doing one risks betraying the poem's most radical thrust. He can certainly be considered with other English poets (of whom the most notable would be Jeremy Prynne) who found the oppressive insularity of English poetry in the early 1960s necessitated an engagement with American poets such as Charles Olson and Ed Dorn. It might be tempting to investigate Raworth's contacts with Donald Davis, or to consider the relation between Raworth and Pound. The problem with any such discussion is that it is difficult to envisage how it could be conducted without recourse to concepts of "influence" or "tradition" which rely on that notion of a coherent self with which Raworth's writing defiantly breaks: "already tradition / is supported / so it may be clipped in / as reality / in fiction sold to anyone / who can look / at a marble cone / marking / a new place to dwell / far / well / e. p. / r. l. p."

Modern technologies make a more useful point of entry to *Writing* than poetic traditions. Raworth worked as an international telephone operator for over two years, and the multiple syntax of *Writing* seems related to this experience rather than to any other poetry - the words retain all their syntactic possibilities like elements plucked from the static of a bad line. Film is even more important for the terms and themes of the poem. On one of his rare excursions into theory, some thirteen years ago,

Raworth signalled his idea of what a contemporary long poem might be like: "the connections (or connectives) no longer work - so how to build the long poem everyone is straining for? (the synopsis is enough for a quick mind now (result of film?) - you can't pad out the book) . . .". *Writing* is the synopsis without connectives, a long poem without strain or padding. Film is also the dominant metaphor for that editing of experience which places everything in frame and on screen for the viewer, whose place the poem seeks to undo:

as though the cuts were frame while memory negs st persistence of vision

It is the contradictory intersection of memory and vision which provides the articulation of the poem. The self cannot find coherence in the evidence of vision, for that is constantly disturbed by the possibilities of memory, while the continuity of memory is broken as attention is constantly refocused on the heterogeneous objects within the visual field. This is investigated fully in the exhilarating opening passages of *Writing*, where the possibility of welding heterogeneity into identity is considered and discarded:

as the tepid picture goes full colour and begins to move but for now we get the idea birds' eye view see the words try to explain what is going in there an imagined book coming in to focus

The attention to the contingent, the insistence on the impossibility of unifying experience except at the cost of repression, the refusal of a coherent voice do lead, however, to genuine problems of comprehension at many points in the poem. This difficulty is not wilfully produced; it is an inevitable consequence of Raworth's commitment to the specificity of the moment. It does point, however, to a genuine cultural contradiction in which Raworth's writing is caught. We continue to read poetry within a culture which gives central importance to literary tradition, and to recognizable divisions

between writers and readers. Raworth's poetry makes an implicit Utopian demand for a culture without such divisions, or such a centre; it is fully anarchist in its equivalent political appeal for "non-administered justice".

The uncompromising nature of such demands prompts certain reservations; and it becomes difficult to read Raworth in a present where cultural and political goals must be more limited. It is instructive to compare him with Tony Harrison, one of our few other important radical poets (of important conservative poets we have an abundance). Harrison's attempt, in his recent *Continuous*, to indicate the linguistic and cultural divisions which rend our society, takes a traditional form, and the autobiographical sequence seeks to fashion coherence out of division. From Raworth's point of view, to engage with such forms is already to have lost the battle. But to fail to engage with such forms might be to deprive oneself of all but the most committed readers.

The great pleasure of *Writing* is that it celebrates joyfully the release from the imaginative constraints, and the mendacity, of the coherent voice. Reservations about the Utopian nature of the project are dispersed as one returns to the poem. *Writing* is dedicated "to the moles and to the bats", animals whose different relation to sound and image place them outside the circles which we are doomed to repeat; it sets itself against that world of vision where light makes everything, including our own position, obvious. The sun appears regularly throughout the poem, inviting us to accept a division into what can and can't be seen, but it is this division which the poem, in its final lyrical passage, surmounts, "so turning / steadily / as it flies / at last / the sun / is level with our eyes".

The winners of the 1983 National Poetry Competition, organized by the Poetry Society in association with BBC Radio Three and judged this year by Gillian Clarke, Kevin Crossley-Holland and Vernon Scannell, were announced recently. First prize was awarded to Carol Ann Duffy for "Whoever Sbed was"; joint second prize to Fergus Chadwick, for "Birds Eggs"; and Stephen Watts for "Lord in dream I was lifted out of London".

COMMENTARY

Disparate educations

Peter Kemp

CHARLOTTE BRONTË
Jane Eyre
BBC1
JANE AUSTEN
Mansfield Park
BBC2

Consecutive Sunday evenings have seen Fanny Price, alerted by a letter, returning to a Mansfield Park devastated by scandal, and Jane Eyre, summoned by a premonition, hastening to a Thornfield Hall ravaged by fire. Interestingly, parallels between Jane Austen's novel and Charlotte Brontë's have been thrown into relief by the recent, near-simultaneous serialization of them. Their plot-patterns, this revealed, are rather similar: in each, an outsider becomes central; a dependent dominates the action; a sensible woman ousts a glamorous rival. The novels' closest affinity however – their intense concern with education – also reveals their extreme disparity. Where *Mansfield Park* is about learning to govern passions, *Jane Eyre* is about a passionate governess. Education, for Jane Austen, involves schooling the emotions; for Charlotte Brontë it can be a means of teaching those who despise you a lesson. Education in *Mansfield Park* makes for self-containment; in *Jane Eyre*, it fosters self-assertion.

The concurrence of the two serializations pointed up this contrast – as well as displaying another: that between a finely effective and a crudely inept serialization of a classic novel. On the face of it, *Jane Eyre* ought to have been the problem. First-person narratives are technically more difficult to dramatize than third-person ones. The novel's tone – sometimes rawly revealing, sometimes thickening into consoling fantasy – isn't the easiest to encompass. Its narrative too, usually pulsing unstopably with indignant energies, can briefly falter into melodrama or sentimentality. Despite this, though, the television version – adapted by Alexander Baron and directed by Julian Ames to eleven compulsive installments – was a notable triumph. Most of the performances were good and many outstanding – especially those of the two main characters. As Jane, Zelah Clarke struck exactly the right note of stubbornly self-valuing determination. Delicate and formidable, she caught perfectly the mix of mortification and vitality that gives Charlotte Brontë's heroine her courageous pertinacity. Timothy Dalton, always skilfully suggesting the woundedness behind his often wounding words, made a potentially saturnine, Byronically erotic Rochester: it's impossible to imagine the role being played with more sensitive intensity. The book's atmosphere, heady with excited response to both the masterful and the schoolmistress, was authentically registered. Also splendidly authentic-seeming were the serial's sets – ravishingly filmed but always looking genuinely lived in.

By contrast, *Mansfield Park* appeared to be taking place in a newly varnished museum;

even the Prices' slatternly nobs at Portsmouth was surprisingly immaculate. These ersatz-seeming interiors, it soon transpired, accorded only too well with the lifeless nature of most of the proceedings. Though the dramatization – a six-part adaptation by Ken Taylor, directed by David Giles – began with some verve, this was deceptive. For the opening scenes were dominated by what were to be the only two sustainedly good performances: Bernard Hepton's Sir Thomas Bertram, a nice portrayal of slightly obtuse humanity creakily confined by the starchy appurtenances of punctilio, and Anna Massey's irascibly predatory Mrs Norris, resembling a hungry, angry fowl with her aggressively craning neck and glaring, red-rimmed eyes.

Elsewhere, things were almost universally inert. Sylvester Le Touzel played Fanny Price as a puppet-like creature, given to strangely wooden little liftings of the hands and glassy rollings of the eyes. When pressed to speak, she emitted squeaks and jerkily reeled out crushed-sounding utterances. All this seemed positively life-like, though, alongside the bizarre dummy Angela Pleasance made of the phlegmatic beauty, Lady Bertram. Endowed with a cracked voice and added head, she appeared as a kind of lolling lunatic, a gape-mouthed, turbaned defective, virtually incapable of holding a cup and saucer.

Around her, performances were generally stylized and stilted – so much so, in fact, as to cause the production considerable difficulty when it came to depicting the rehearsing of *Lovers' Vows*. Given the level of atavistic declamation prevalent in the Bertrams' drawing-room, it took no mean degree of ranting to suggest the histrionics in their improvised theatre. As Henry Crawford, Robert Borgee minced and mouthed in a way likely to reinforce the crassest misapprehensions about the nature of Jane Austen's world. But most of the cast wore their clothes as if trying out costumes for a fancy-dress party and delivered their lines as if practising for an elocution class.

When – in the form of Mr Price – something less polished was called for, the production lurched spectacularly to the opposite extreme. Fanny's father – his face a bloated beetroot underneath a skew-whiff wig – could hardly have received a rummer rendering. A farcical caricature of a sailor always three sheets to the wind, he was presented as undilutedly sordid. Most grossly distorted was the scene where he meets Crawford with Fanny and Susano in the streets of Portsmouth. On this occasion, Jane Austen stresses, Mr Price's manners "were more than passable . . . his expressions were those of an attached father, and a sensible man". In the television version, he nudged Crawford in the ribs with a pimp-like leer and cackled, "You've got my girls in tow, eh!" With most of its performances either preposterous or ponderous, this production seemed particularly well-advised in quickly passing by the book's remarks, in its rehearsal scenes, about "good, hardened real acting" and absurdly artificial parodies of it.

FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of December 28, 1933, carried the following review by Alex Glendinning of *A Draft of XXX Cantos by Ezra Pound*. In his "Backlog for Ezra Pound," Mr W. B. Yeats has told us of a discussion he had with Mr Pound about "that immense poem of which but seven and twenty cantos are already published." I have often found there some scene of distinguished beauty," Mr Yeats observes, "but have never discovered why all the suits could not be dealt out in some quite different order." A cursory survey of the "Cantos" will suggest the variety of the "suits" which Mr Pound deals out. *Canto I* is a translation from a sixteenth-century version of the *Odyssey*. *Canto II* begins with a reference to Robert Browning and Sordello and proceeds through various transitions into a *Metamorphosis* from Ovid's *Third Book*. *Canto III* begins a scene in Venice and ends with a translation from the "Poem of the Old." *Canto VIII* introduces a pastiche of the life and times of Sigismondo Malatesta which occupies three cantos. Others are devoted to contemporary themes: the

sodes from the careers of financiers, the war, even *Atlantis* flights – to invective against various contemporaries of Mr Pound and to ramifications of themes already stated. "We are not to look for 'logic of discourse' in Mr Pound's poem," but we may insist that the necessity of his design should make itself felt, that the order in which his "suits" are dealt out should not be open to question. The fact that often his themes are hinted at rather than stated; that to perceive every link which connects them one would need an erudition equal to Mr Pound's makes the task of the reader, in seeking that order and necessity, very difficult. The "Cantos" rely too much and too pedantically on material which is referred to rather than knit into the texture of the poem; and unevenness of accomplishment adds to the difficulty of realizing their design. There is writing in the "Cantos" which has all the sensitive compulsion and precision that we look for in poetry. There is also writing which is exemplary only for its badness, as in the overwrought invective of *Cantos XIV* and *XV*.

Schooling the squiggle

Lindsay Duguid

Quentin Blake: Illustrator
Lyttelton Foyer, until January 28

The neat and unpretentious exhibition, *Quentin Blake: Illustrator*, in the Lyttelton Foyer aptly portrays the range, if not the variety, of that prolific artist's work; from the cartoons for *Punch* and the *Spectator* in the 1960s to the first signs of his flowering as a children's book illustrator of genius with a preference for the quirky, the inane and the vulgar. The workmanlike nature of the exhibition seems to imply that stamina and longevity are as important to the working illustrator as flair – something which is hinted at in an early drawing showing a depressed-looking bearded figure in a shabby overcoat and entitled "The Daft Member of the Family going into Art".

It is good that an artist's professionalism should be commemorated, but Blake will be remembered less for his elegant David Mellors catalogues and his sprightly decorations for the *Sunday Telegraph* letters page than for his inspired interpretation of such things as Russell Hoban's *Hired Sportsmen*, 1974, John Yeomans's *Wild Washerwomen*, 1979, and

The periodicals, 9: TriQuarterly

Cairns Craig

RICHARD GIBBONS (Editor)
TriQuarterly 57

Volume 1 – A Window on Poland. 124pp.
Volume 2 – Prose from Spain. 111pp.
Northwestern University, 1735 Benson Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60201. \$3.95 per volume.

Through the first half of the 1970s *TriQuarterly* was almost compulsory reading for anyone interested in what seemed to be the breakthrough into a new kind of fiction by a generation of American writers disillusioned with the reality – and even with anguished reactions to the reality – of the America they had inherited. If it is the hope of every small magazine that it will coincide with the most urgent needs of the age, it is a hope rarely fulfilled; but in a series of half-a-dozen separate issues, entitled "Ongoing American Fiction" and stretching over nearly five years, *TriQuarterly* managed to present some of the most stimulating new writing of the age – from authors such as Coover, Creeley, Oates, Gass, McElroy and Brontë – beside some of the most distinguished criticism and literary theory inspired by and inspiring that creative effort. In a decade in which some critics announced the death of the author, the conjunction was enlightening and challenging: a debate which elsewhere was promoted through journals dedicated to a single point of view took place within the covers of a single magazine; and so Gerald Graff's sustained attack on postmodernism could be read cheek by jowl with the latest contributions to the mode, and set in tension with the celebratory criticism of Hassan or Scholes.

When, in 1964, he turned a campus production typical of the late 1950s, full of self-congratulatory pieces by or about its staff and students, into "an international journal of art, writing, and cultural inquiry," Charles Newman could hardly have expected such success. In his first issue, however, he dedicated the magazine to an experimental pluralism and it is precisely its refusal to settle for a single perspective, either in the style of work it publishes or in the role it assigns to itself, that has given it continued vitality as "postmodernism" recedes to the historical horizon. Thus not only has *TriQuarterly* fulfilled the classic function of a literary magazine in the twentieth century by providing space for writing that is not commercially viable, it has also given us the best account we have of the phenomenon of the literary magazine in its issue, No. 43, "The Little Magazine in America," which extended to 750 pages. Not only has it provided space for sustained critical writing and celebratory issues on Nabokov (No. 17), Dahlberg (19) and

Ronald Dahl's *Revolving Rhymes*, 1982. Images such as the seven tiny bearded Hampstead-dwellers in casual sports jackets and roll-neck sweaters who cling to Snow-White's jeans, or the woodcutters being vigorously washed by the river's eddy repay the close scrutiny that popular children's books inevitably receive. But there are additional warmth and dash in his own books and it is the art-work for *Panick*, 1968, *Angelo*, 1970 and *Mr Magnolia*, 1980, which are the most interesting and exciting exhibits. It is fascinating to see the evidence of hesitation and correction in what eventually appears as a squiggly line of the utmost assurance; and sobering to realize how much even good quality hardback editions tone down the glowing colours of the originals. One layout from *Angelo* demonstrates the mixture of calculation and *panache* which characterizes Blake's work: a small procession with a cat salutes some peasants in the Tuscan fields; the pointing fills its frame beautifully and the movement of the waving hands is effortlessly echoed in hills, trees, vines, horses' ears and hats. Almost as impressive in its way is his illustration to Michael Rosen's *Quick Let's Go Out of Here!*, 1983, which realizes, apparently without dismay, the line "I know someone who can take a mouthful of custard and blow it down their nose".

Cage (54), it has handed itself over to generic forms usually considered too lowly for a serious literary concern: "War Stories" in No. 45, "Western Stories" in No. 48. Perhaps most importantly of all in an American context, it has sought consistently to act as intermediary between America and the outside world. This hasn't taken the form of submission to Parisian fashions in metacriticism – a mandarin set of gestures all too easily learned for cutting an imposing figure back home – but of the harder task of translating and situating works from very different historical backgrounds and cultural traditions. There have been issues devoted to Eastern European, to Asian and to Israeli writing, as well as an excellent double issue on "Russian Literature and Culture in the West".

If there has been less of a sense of *TriQuarterly*'s centrality to contemporary debate, recently (perhaps because there is less of a debate), its role as intermediary has come to seem increasingly important. The latest double issue consists of new writing from two countries experiencing very different kinds of political development, Poland and Spain. Putting them side by side brings out powerfully not only differences in dominant styles – the Polish writing full of banality and apocalypse, the Spanish of a sensual surrealism – but differences in the pressures under which writers have to work. For the Poles *sanitized* has provided a technological space which is a revolt by virtue of its form. For the Spaniards the end of censorship has brought a strained sense of failed expectation because there aren't dozens of unknown masterpieces circulating underground. But what Juan Goytisolo and Andrzej Kijowski agree on from their different perspectives is the fact that it is not censorship which is destructive, but the habitual self-censorship which long years of repression enforce – "conditioned reflexes that proved difficult to unlearn". Both volumes contain writing by those who have transcended conditioned reflexes (Konwicki's extract from *A minor apocalypse* and Merce Rodera's from *So much of such a war* stand out), forming a fitting testimony not only to the vitality of their own cultures, but to *TriQuarterly*'s consistent effort to challenge those habits of reading and of expectation which, in our own "freedoms," ossify easily into self-censorship.

The Arts Council has just announced the names of winners of the 1983 writers' bursaries: William Anderson, Stephen Bagnall, Roger Garrett, John Hargrave, Fisher, Ronald Hayman, Ursula Holden, Sheila Mackay, John Hope Mason, Richard O'Neil, Peter Reading, Christopher Reid, Clive Sinclair, Carolyn Slaughter, George Squires, Rose Treman and Hugo Williams.

The system of ruins

John Gray

As it has been disclosed to us in twentieth-century political history, the fate of Marxism is to be the first world-view in human history that is genuinely self-refuting. To be sure, all systems of general ideas about man and society have unintended consequences when they are given practical effect, and it is a commonplace that the distance between doctrine and practice is nowhere wider or harder to bridge than in political life. Further, it is a familiar theme in political thought that social institutions may over the long run have a self-destructing tendency in so far as they cannot help breeding expectations they fail to satisfy.

None of these traditional themes succeeds in capturing the thoroughly paradoxical role of Marxian ideas to contemporary political life. The distinctive achievement of Marxism, peculiarly iconic in a system of ideas committed to the unity of theory with practice, is that its most spectacular victories in the real world have afforded the most devastating criticisms of its fundamental tenets. Accordingly, in installing in Russia and in much of Asia new economic and political institutions to which nothing in the old orders corresponded, the communist régimes have exhibited unequivocally that radical autonomy of general ideas in the political realm which their official doctrine, no less than classical Marxism, tirelessly denies. The stupendous successes of communism in the real world have given a practical self-refutation of the Marxian system, since in every case the actual result of a revolutionary socialist victory has been to flout the aspirations of the revolutionaries as it demonstrates once again the impossibility of communism as Marx conceived it.

The self-refutation in practice of Marxism over the past half century was not anticipated in the theoretical writings of Marx's critics. In a rare moment of realistic insight, the great Russian anarchist, Bakunin, predicted that the outcome of a Marxian socialist revolution would be a form of dictatorship more repressive and more exploitative than the bourgeois political order it had replaced. In a far more systematic fashion, Bohm-Bawerk in *Die Kritik der Marx'schen Theorie* (1896) dissected the errors of Marx's economic theory and showed how they debilitated his account of market capitalism, while Bohm-Bawerk's successors in the Austrian School of Economics, L. von Mises and F. A. Hayek, developed in the 1920s and 1930s powerful theoretical arguments explaining the failures in resource-allocation of socialist systems. Apocalyptic though it has been, the history of Marxism in practice over the past half-century has served only to give concrete historical exemplification to the criticisms of Marx's ideas that were developed during his lifetime and in the first fifty years after his death.

TOM BOTTOMORE (Editor)
A Dictionary of Marxist Thought

367pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £27.50.
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GERARD BEKERMANN

Marx and Engels: A conceptual concordance
Translated by Terrell Carver
265pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £22.50.
045113011X

DAVID FELIX

Marx in Politics
307pp. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. \$27.50.
089310732

ERNEST NOLTE

Marxism, Fascism, Cold War
348pp. Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum.
0482218779

ALFRED CALINICOS

The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx
266pp. Bookmarks, 265 Seven Sisters Road, Finsbury Park, London, N4. £3.95.
080624098

Marxism and Philosophy

177pp. Oxford University Press. £9.50.
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DAVID M. ELLAN (Editor)

Marx: The first hundred years
316pp. Fontana: Paperback. £3.95.
0451094612

The ruin of Marx's system by the events of the past half-century has in no way inhibited the production of Marxian theoretical literature in Western societies. Throughout the past hundred years, Marxian ideas have served in capitalist societies as weapons in the armoury of cultural criticism, as tools in projects for revisionary history and as postulates for much sociological research. In fulfilling this role of promoting self-criticism within Western society, Marxian thinkers have been compelled to refine the central notions of Marx's system beyond anything he could have recognized or endorsed, and in so doing they have often obfuscated important questions in the interpretation of his writings. It is one of the few hopeful features of the flurry of activity surrounding the anniversary of his death that a handful of books has appeared that give Marx's life and work the benefit of a detached and scrupulous historical analysis. In this connection the *Dictionary of Marxist Thought* edited by Tom Bottomore is an invaluable aid in identifying the key terms in Marx's own work and distinguishing their force in Marx from the uses made of them by later writers. Bottomore's *Dictionary* is usefully complemented by Gérard Bekermann's *Marx and Engels: A conceptual concordance*, in which the crucial ideas of the two writers are illustrated by quotations from their writings, carefully chosen by Bekermann and skilfully translated by Terrell Carver. These works of reference will prove indispensable to anyone who wishes to form a reasoned judgment about the currently fashionable thesis that it was Engels who made of Marx's subtle and eclectic thought a crude and mechanical system.

A very different, but equally valuable service is performed by David Felix's *Marx as Politician*. Felix's method is unique in Marxian scholarship inasmuch as he develops his incisive criticism of Marx's theories through the medium of a demystifying political biography. His strategy is to deconstruct Marx's chief theoretical claims by illuminating their force as acts in his struggles for political power over the emergent working-class movements of nineteenth-century Europe and their rivalrous leaders. Nowhere in Felix's elegantly and bitterly written book does he suggest that understanding Marx's theories in this way, as aspects of his political practice, by itself devalues their claims to truth, but he shows convincingly that we can best account for the manifest incoherences of Marx's system by viewing it as a makeshift, constantly reworked according to the political necessities of the moment. Again, without ever replicating the vulgarities of psychohistory, Felix gives a psychological gloss to his political reading of Marx's theoretical activity by displaying its roots in an ungovernably assertive and domineering personality. Marx's virulent contempt for ethical socialism, his rigid posture of opposition to all existing social orders and his cynical dismissal of the

claims of small nations and vanquished classes are given a compelling interpretation by reference to his anomic and obsessional fascination with power. Felix's final assessment of Marx's political vision grasps firmly a truth that has been stubbornly resisted by all of his conventional biographers when he writes, "Nazi" was the simplified acronym for National Socialist German Workers Party. It was an accurate name for the party Marx would like to have led in Germany in 1848-9, nationalistic, socialistic and as anti-Semitic as tactically useful."

The many affinities between Marx's political vision and the ideas and movements of the radical Right which Felix identifies are profoundly explored in Ernst Nolte's important collection of essays, *Marxism, Fascism, Cold War* (the German edition was reviewed in the TLS by Walter Laqueur on March 17, 1978). Since his seminal study, *Three Faces of Fascism* (1965), Nolte has been widely misread as a theorist of Fascism who conceives it in Marxian terms as the radical anti-socialist response to capitalist crisis and who seeks the annihilation of the liberal category of totalitarianism in the explanation of both communism and Fascism. The discursive and wide-ranging essays assembled in this volume should lay to rest any such interpretation of Nolte's work, which is distinctive in representing contemporary Marxist practice as having authentic origins in Marxian doctrine and instructive in perceiving the structural similarities of Marxian and Fascist contestations of bourgeois society. Thus in identifying, in his brief essay on "The conservative features in Marxism", the character of Marxism (understood here to mean the doctrines held in common by Marx and Engels) as a critique of modernity, Nolte helps us towards an explication of the encrusted cultural conservatism of all actual communist régimes that is more adequate than any to be found in the strained apologetics of Western Marxian writers. The enmity of communist governments to all the most radical expressions of the modern spirit – in art and philosophy as well as life-style and popular culture – is correctly perceived as emanating directly from the anti-individualist animus which pervades the thought of Marx and Engels alike. The repression in communist states of all modernist movements is not, then, an aberration or even an unintended consequence of Marx's doctrine, but simply an expression of its original intent. In its application to the fascist phenomenon, Nolte's analysis is conclusive in linking the Rousseauesque primitivism of Marx's fantasy of ending the social division of labour with the fascist rebellion against commercial society. As Nolte dries observes:

Fascism can be directly compared with Marxism of the Soviet Union only in its radical form, in respect of its inner solidarity and its appeal to comrades of like mind in all countries; Italian fascism, in its phase as a development dictatorship, and more than that the Croatian Ustase and the Romanian Iron Guard were in fact, on the contrary, more like many of today's "national liberation movements" than like late National Socialism . . . there is nothing more grotesque than a "theory of Fascism" which degrades capitalism with much sincere indignation as the root of Fascism, at the same time overlooking that the theory identifies itself with conditions which show all the formal characteristics of Fascism. It is not astonishing that the liberal capitalist system produces Fascism under certain circumstances, but it is astonishing that in the great majority of cases Fascism has not succeeded in gaining power in spite of certain circumstances. The explanation can only lie in the fact that this social system with its peculiar lack of conception, its deep-rooted divergencies, its in-born tendency to self-criticism, its separation of economic, political and spiritual power obviously offers strong resistance to a transformation to fascist solidarity, and is aware that the deliverance which is promised would at the same time be loss of self. Thus capitalism is indeed the soil of Fascism, but the plant only grows to imposing strength if an exorbitant dose of Marxist fertilizer is added to the soil.

The most important essay in Nolte's collection deals not with the question of Fascism, however, but with errors in the historical interpretation of early industrial capitalism which have been widely disseminated by Marxian writers. Along with radical Tories such as Oastler, Sadler, Southey and Disraeli, Marx and Engels associated the Industrial Revolution with the pauperization of the masses and the devastation of their traditional ways of life. By comparison with the factory system as it developed under *laissez-faire* capitalism, pre-industrial life was pictured in almost Arcadian

terms of satisfying work, harmonious community and a reasonable sufficiency of material goods. Nolte is assiduously specific in documenting how Marx and Engels and the reactionary and Romantic critics of industrialism and the factory system neglected the filth, squalor and waste of human life endemic in pre-industrial society. In this Nolte's analysis parallels that of a number of contemporary economic historians, among whom the most distinguished is R. M. Hartwell, whose researches have gone far to establish that the Marxian immiseration thesis is as false in respect of early industrialism as it is of our own capitalist economies. An explosion of population involving a massive decline in infant mortality rates, increasing consumption of commodities hitherto regarded as luxuries and many other empirical factors point to the early industrial period in England as one of much-enhanced popular living standards.

At the same time, Nolte is careful to specify the background of this explosion in living standards in several centuries of European and, above all, English political and cultural development which preceded it. Noting that "European society is, from its beginnings in the early middle ages onward, the society of a functioning or dynamic pluralism whose several relatively autonomous powers, such as royalty and the aristocracy, the state and the church, and also the individual states restrict each other, and yet they remain even in sharpest struggle, related to each other and subject to mutual influence", Nolte inverts the historical materialist thesis of the primacy of technological and economic factors in accounting for social and political changes and explains the technological development of early industrialism as a variable dependent upon pluralist legal and political institutions. In so doing he is concerned to stress particularly the importance of the English example, wherein the Industrial Revolution was the culmination of several centuries of agrarian development on a market model. His account of the background and conditions of the Industrial Revolution in England converges at several points with that given by Alan MacFarlane in his fascinating *Origins of English Individualism*, and it would be encouraging to suppose that Nolte's book will do something to subvert the legend, which the writings of Karl Polanyi and C. B. Macpherson have made a central element in academic folklore, that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England encompassed a radical transition from communitarian to individualist forms of social life.

The upshot of Nolte's analysis is that European capitalism is a historical singularity, in no way the necessary or inevitable outcome of human social development taken as a whole. It

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was as a lucky chance, the unlikely outcome of a serendipitous conjunction of events, that market processes were able to spread in the early Middle Ages and thus to lay down the necessary conditions for the emergence of large-scale capitalist production. This conclusion goes against one of the central tenets of Marx's thought, and allows us to pinpoint one of its most disastrous errors. For all his insistence on the particularities of specific cultures and on the unevenness of economic development in different nations, Marx (and Engels after him, albeit with fewer saving reservations) subscribed to a belief in something like a law of the increasing development over human history of productive forces. He asserted this not just as a brute historical fact nor yet as a mere trend, but as the unifying principle of human history. It is such a principle, something mid-way between the statement of a trend and the enunciation of a law that G. A. Cohen terms the Development Thesis in his *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (1978). It is one of the most noteworthy features of Cohen's book, which sets standards of competence and rigour in argument which have been matched by few twentieth-century Marxian thinkers and which non-Marxian philosophers would do well to try to emulate, that his defence of the Development Thesis is feeble and admittedly unsuccessful. In the end Cohen is driven to invoke in its support a starkly Benthamite, and for that reason wholly un-Marxian, conception of man as an economizer of his effort.

This move has to confront, however, the inconvenient fact that the systematic and continuous expansion of productive forces over many centuries appears to have occurred within capitalist Europe and its offshoots and nowhere else. Explaining the singularity of capitalist development generates a most fundamental criticism of the Marxian scheme of historical interpretation. For, contrary to Cohen's attempted reconstruction of historical materialism in Darwinian functionalist form, a mechanism for filtering out inefficient productive arrangements exists only within the capitalist mode of production. Within a capitalist market economy, there is a powerful incentive for enterprises to innovate technologically, and to adopt innovations pioneered by others, since firms which persist in using less efficient technologies will lose markets, reap dwindling profits and eventually fail. Nothing akin to this selective mechanism of market competition existed to filter out inefficient technologies in the Asiatic mode of production, and it has no replica in existing socialist command economies. Cohen's defence of the Development Thesis is bound to fail because it attempts to account for the replacement of one productive mode by another by invoking a mechanism which features internally in only a single mode of production, market capitalism.

Cohen's argument has the virtue of confronting a central difficulty in Marxian historical materialism which most Marxian writers prefer to pass over. Thus the problem is mentioned by Alex Callinicos neither in his propagandist tract, *The Revolutionary Ideas of Marx*, nor in his more reflective and self-critical *Marxism and Philosophy*. None of the writers in David McLellan's *Marx: The first hundred years* takes it up, even when (as in the essays by Raymond Williams, Ernest Mandel and Roy Edgley) their contributions focus more or less directly on problems and applications of historical materialism. This omission is striking and lamentable, but eminently understandable, since any recognition of the inadequacy of the Marxian scheme of historical development is bound to undermine the viability of Marxian socialism itself. If we acknowledge, as did Marx, the essentially unconservative character of capitalist enterprise, we will find it incongruous that his and his followers imagine that the prodigious virtuosity of capitalism can be retained while its central mechanism, market competition, is abolished. There is, in fact, no reason to think that the productive achievements of capitalism will even be maintained, still less surpassed, once market mechanisms for allocating resources are removed. It is this insight which explains the vast chasms and colossal malinvestments which are typical of all existing socialist command economies. In Marx's own writings, in accordance with his refusal to engage in utopian speculations, no proposal is ever advanced for the coordination

of economic activity in socialist or communist societies: it is simply assumed, with the utmost naïveté, that an acceptable allocation of resources to particular uses will emerge spontaneously, without the need for markets or pricing, from the collaborative discussions of socialist citizens. It was indeed to this gigantic evasion that Lenin referred obliquely, when he confessed that the principal task of the Bolsheviks in the USSR was the construction of state capitalism. Aside from the fact that it entails inexorably a concentration of power in bureaucratic institutions which Marx always sought to avoid, but which was realized fully in the Stalinist period, Lenin's project of a state capitalist régime was bound to founder on the



A tax collector in Kazimierz, the old ghetto of Cracow (1938), reproduced from Roman Vishniac's *A Vanished World* (180pp, Allen Lane, £30.00/39.1935).

absence within it of the central capitalist institution for resource-allocation.

In the event, the Soviet experience amply confirmed the predictions of those economists of the Austrian School, above all von Mises and Hayek, who argued for the impossibility of rational resource allocation under socialist institutions. In the Soviet Union, working-class living standards after over sixty years of state capitalist construction are probably lower than in Brazil, while elsewhere, in Hungary and in China, only the expedient of reintroducing capitalist institutions is allowing wealth to grow and incomes to rise. These developments exemplify in concrete historical contexts the theoretical insights with which the Austrian economists prevailed over their socialist opponents in the great debates of the inter-war years. Yet, despite their intellectual victory, the Austrian arguments have been ignored by generations of economists and their relevance to the Soviet experience has been expounded in depth only by Paul Craig Roberts in his vital and neglected book *Alienation and the Soviet Economy* (1971). It is entirely characteristic that in his contribution to the McLellan collection, Mandel, after showing an awareness of the calculation debates that distinguished him from the bulk of his professional colleagues, should demonstrate his inability to grasp the nature of the problem at issue when he remarks innocently of von Mises's argument that it is "in the meantime been taken care of by the computer". As it has turned out, history has forced back on to the intellectual agenda a debate which the intelligentsia for several generations consigned to the memory hole.

The ruin of Marxism both as a scheme of historical interpretation and as a theory of economic organization has evoked a variety of responses among contemporary Marxian writers.

The great majority has tried to prevent the destruction of the doctrine by intractable facts through the elaboration of protective *ad hoc* hypotheses. Accordingly, an effort has been made to explain the catastrophic impact of Marxism in Russia by seeking out continuities between the political culture and institutions of Tsarism and those of the Soviet power, with the underlying institution that in Russian enlightened Western European creed of democracy and freedom was corrupted by contact with tyrannous native traditions. Its culturally racist features aside, this argument misrepresents Tsarism, which for the last sixty years of its history was an open, progressive authoritarian system, far less inhumane or re-

pressive than Susan Easton's search for affinities and convergences in *Humanist Marxism and Wittgensteinian Social Philosophy*. Easton's intriguing project of linking up a form of Marxism in which human activity and not historical law is central, with the Wittgensteinian conception of knowledge as embodied in social practices, does not face its hardest difficulty in the biographical fact that Wittgenstein's own political views were conservative, not to say reactionary, and were never seen by him to conflict in any way with his developed philosophical outlook. The most serious difficulty for this kind of Marxian theorizing is its irresistible tendency to slip into an idealist constructivism about the social world of precisely the sort Marx repudiated in his attacks on Hegel and on Stirner. The metaphysical turn of humanist Marxism is sure to be a dead end because it begins by shedding the realist commitments which Marx himself rightly thought to be most distinctive of his view of social life.

In their retreat from empirical theorizing to essentialist metaphysics, the Hegelian Marxists forgo one of Marx's most ambitious projects: the development of a comprehensive theory of ideology. Any theory of ideology, and above all a Marxian theory, incorporates a distinction between appearance and reality in society which the idealist implication of humanist Marxism tends to occlude. Further, the abandonment of the claim to scientific realism in Marx's thought suggests an obvious question about the ideological character of humanist Marxism itself. This is a question that haunts Jorge Larraín's meandering and inconclusive discussions in *Marxism and Ideology*, but which is posed decisively at several points in Jean Cohen's *Class and Civil Society: The Limits of Marxian Critical Theory*. Cohen's is a luminously intelligent investigation of the limitations of Marxian class theory which takes seriously the criticism of socialist and Marxist thought as itself having the mystifying and repressive functions of an ideology. She considers in this context not only the theory of Konrad Szelenyi, which echoes the predictions of the late nineteenth-century Polish anarchist, Wladyslaw Machajski, in representing Marxism in the Soviet bloc as the instrument of a novel form of domination, but also Western theorists of the new class such as Irving Kristol and Alvin Gouldner.

Cohen's own attitude in Szelenyi's class analysis of the Eastern bloc societies – a most useful exposition of which Szelenyi gives himself in his contribution to M. Burawoy and Thedn Skocpol's *Marxist Inquiries* – is not free from ambiguity. She recognizes the truth in Szelenyi's and Konrad's claims regarding the existence of an exploitative social stratum which has arisen in the communist régimes by its control of education and of access to information, but she goes on to criticize their approach as flawed because it adopts a strategy of analysis whose limitations are those of Marx's class theory. The opposite situation seems to me to be the true one: the theory of the new class in its control of education and of access to information, but she goes on to criticize their approach with Marxian class theory. That the new class is not a Marxian class is a criticism of the theory of Szelenyi and Konrad only in so far as they see themselves as completing Marxian social theory rather than abandoning it whenever new forms of injustice and exploitation elude its grasp.

The general relevance of the theory of the new class is that it encourages us to look at the ideological function of socialist thought itself in a new light. For none of these reasons really justifies the ill-health of the earlier literature, the blind refusal to confront the fact that French Communist leaders were working politicians with an ineluctable concern for their own grass roots, that PCF members were not only people but often notably resourceful and intelligent ones; and that the entire organization was always better understood as a particular strand of labour movement not so different from many others, rather than merely the French agency of an international communist conspiracy. One is left with the feeling that the impact (function?) of the Cold War on the world was to blot out the possibility of rethinking which would have had a truly enlightening effect had it come out in the period which this book is concerned to analyse and describe.

The period covered by Wall was, of course, the high period of Maurice Thorez. It is very much to Wall's credit that he has not merely read the whole of the PCF press (and much of the more general press) and consulted a wide range of archival material, but that he has also sought out and interviewed at length old PCF leaders such as Tillo, Fajon, Lecoq, Pron, and others. From all this he has produced a picture of the monolithic party of Maurice Thorez, which actually sheltered an

wards. Whereas a theory of the ideological functions of the socialist system promises much in the illumination of the chronic legitimization of the communist régimes and of the conflicts in our own societies, the project of developing fully such a theory is one that even independent critical thinkers of the stature of Jean Cohen seem to retreat from.

The undefended assumption that socialist goals stand in need of no ideological demystification, even if socialist régimes sometimes do, is an outstanding feature of Barry Smart's able exploration of the relations of Foucault's thought with Marxism, and the inherent progressiveness of the socialist ideal figures as a presupposition of analysis, inhibiting fundamental criticism, equally in George G. Barker's *Marx's Ethics of Freedom*. It seems that the stance of radical nuptitude does not extend, so far as these writers are concerned, to the socialist conventional wisdom of the Western academic class.

A re-emergence of Marxism as a progressive research programme in social theory may be predicated upon several rather exacting conditions. A new Marxism worthy of serious critical attention would have to confront the Austrian thesis that market competition and bureau-

cratic command structures are together the mutually exhaustive means of resource-allocation in complex industrial societies, with command economies having ineradicable tendencies to vast waste and malinvestment. It would have to consider the possibility that the economic chaos and political repression characteristic of all socialist command economies are not mere aberrations, but structurally inseparable results of such economies. It would, above all, need to confront the repressed possibility that the Gulag represents an unavoidable phase in socialist construction rather than a contingent incident in Soviet (and Chinese) experience. In order to face these hard questions, a new Marxism would demand a purer and more self-critical method of thought than any variety of Marxism has so far achieved. It would need to engage directly with the moral theory of justice and exploitation and to abandon the forlorn pretence that it can deploy some special, dialectical logic to circumvent contradictions within its own theories. The central concern of such a new Marxism – to link normative exploitation theory with empirical class analysis – is in fact the subject-matter of a powerful new school of Analytical Marxism, led by such outstanding figures as G. A. Cohen, Jon Elster and John Roemer, with whose works the fu-

ture of Marxism, if it has any, must henceforth be associated.

It is hard to imagine that the version of Marxian theory which looks like being developed by these thinkers will do more than generate a few scattered insights which are easily absorbed into normal social science. Once the spurious claim to esoteric insight and omniscient method is given up, Marxian thought confronts the same intractable difficulties in the theory of justice and in the philosophy of social science which have bedevilled non-Marxian thought, and it has little that is special of its own to offer. The attraction of Marxism to the Western intelligentsia was, in any case, never that of an analytically superior theoretical system in social science. It was rather the appeal of a historical theodicy, in which Judeo-Christian moral hopes were to be realized without the need for a transcendental commitment which reason could not sanction. In the communist societies where Marxism has been institutionalized as the official ideology, its mythopoetic elements have not indeed been especially prominent. For all the paraphernalia of the Lenin cult, Marxist ideology has functioned there in Hobbesian fashion, as an instrument of political discipline, and has no role in spiritual life. If anything, the inability of

communist Marxism to function as a comprehensive view of the world has added a new twist to the history of its practical self-refutation, as when the Soviet Buryat Mongols appropriate the official legend of the Paris communards and pray to their spirits, which have come to rest in the home of the Buryat's traditional objects of worship under Lake Baikal. Yet the irony of Marxism's self-effacement in the Soviet Union is unlikely to be altogether evaded in the liberal intellectual cultures of the West, even if it does not take the beautiful form of a Shamanistic metamorphosis of Marxist piety. Western analytical Marxism will flourish and expand just insofar as it possesses those mythic elements in Marx's thought that it is committed to shedding.

At the same time, eliminating the mythic content of Marxism will rob it of its distinctive power and speed its recuperation by bourgeois social science. The final dilemma of Western Marxism is that, unless it represses in the interests of criticism and objective knowledge the mythopoetic impulse which explains its appeal over the past century, it can only present to the rest of us the spectacle of an esoteric and barely intelligible cult, whose devotees pass their time picking reverently among the shards and smithereens of a broken altar.

The Thorez party

R. W. Johnson

BWVNW WALL,
French Communism in the Era of Stalin: The Quest for Unity and Integration, 1945-1962
200pp, Greenwood Press, £26.50,
(013236623)

During the 1940s and 50s, when the French Communist Party (PCF) was the largest and most powerful party in France, students eager to comprehend this phenomenon found themselves faced with an absurdly thin literature: a scattering of writings by embittered and frequently unbalanced ex-Communists mingled with horn-rimmed, utterly external Cold War diatribes against totalitarianism produced by Western "experts". Now that the PCF has lost a great deal of its strength and importance, a more mature and scholarly literature has begun to accumulate. Apart from the works of Krigel, Lavru and Robrieux in French we have had Wohl's *French Communism in the Making*, Blackmer and Tarrow's *Communism in Italy and France*, Tiersky's *French Communism 1920-72*, Stelfoulx's *The French Communist Party in Transition* and Jones's *Workers and Communists in France*. Brian Wall's new book stands comparison with the very best of these – it is thorough, painstaking and level-headed.

There are some respectable reasons for this high scholarly appreciation – more sources are available now, more Communists are willing to talk frankly, and there are far more and better scholars about. But none of these reasons really justifies the ill-health of the earlier literature, the blind refusal to confront the fact that French Communist leaders were working politicians with an ineluctable concern for their own grass roots, that PCF members were not only people but often notably resourceful and intelligent ones; and that the entire organization was always better understood as a particular strand of labour movement not so different from many others, rather than merely the French agency of an international communist conspiracy. One is left with the feeling that the impact (function?) of the Cold War on the world was to blot out the possibility of rethinking which would have had a truly enlightening effect had it come out in the period which this book is concerned to analyse and describe.

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control was often extremely weak and conditional. Wall is good at reading between the lines, at picking up nuances: the shifting factional world of Politburo disputes has probably never been better covered than here.

The Thorez who emerges from these pages is a shrewd and nationally ambitious politician, frequently with a lively distrust of Moscow, but to whom Stalinist political organization was a prerequisite for the maintenance in power of a co-opted working class élite. When Thorez was hospitalized in Russia in the early 1950s he was concerned that Stalin might prevent his return and was desperate to get back to a party which was on the point of collapse and over which he had effectively lost all control. His slow and painful re-assertion of authority then ran full tilt into the problems posed by Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956. Thorez formed an alliance with Molotov and Malenkov, who seem to have assured him that the speech would never get published or, if it did, would be denounced as a forgery. When this gambit collapsed he turned Thorez repeatedly and indignantly demanded a full, authenticated version of the speech for circulation with the PCF. He never got it.

Wall suggests that Thorez played at this point with the notion of setting himself up as the senior Communist figure in the West, a parallel figure to Mao in the East, and that he

The persistent heretic

R. K. Kindersley

STEPHEN CLISSOLD
Djilas: The Progress of a Revolutionary
343pp, Maurice Temple Smith, £15,
0851172369

The political dilemmas which face the rulers of Communist states are not new, particularly that of a party-led bureaucracy alienated from the people it governs and enjoying privilege and comfort on such a scale as to make nonsense of the axiom by which socialist society is supposed to operate: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his work". Lenin, at the end of his life, was much concerned with the danger of bureaucracy, while Trotsky made it the mainstay of his critique of Stalinist Russia. In our own time the man who gave this line of attack a new force was the fallen Yugoslav Communist leader, Milovan Djilas, whose book *The New Class* was published in the United States in 1957. By then Djilas was in jail: after an earlier clash with the Yugoslav leadership he had undertaken to muzzle himself, but the rebellious (in Poland and Hungary in 1956 had spurred him to question. In an American magazine, not only Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, but his own government's ambivalent attitude to events in Hun-

gary. For most of the next ten years Djilas was to be the most famous political prisoner of the Communist world.

The biography of Djilas which now comes from the pen of the late Stephen Clissold (and no one who knew that gentle, versatile and industrious scholar will be surprised to find that he had just finished a book when he died) traces the phases of Djilas's life: his origins in the patriarchal clan society of Montenegro; his Communist activities and consequent imprisonment under the Yugoslav monarchy in the 1930s; his rise to leadership in the Partisan Resistance movement; the years of power when he was one of Tito's three closest associates; the coming of disillusion, disgrace and further imprisonment (this time at Communist hands); and finally, for the past seventeen years and still today, the life of an "internal émigré" in his own country, to be ostracized, ignored or attacked as political requirements dictate, his voice heard abroad but not at home. The death of Tito has made no difference here.

Although Djilas can claim literacy as well as political importance, as the author of a number of novels and short stories, it is in his political career and other writings, often a mixture of history and autobiography, that he must primarily be judged. Until the Yugoslav leaders break with Stalin, Djilas had been called upon

to display valour in the face of police or enemy, and had done so with distinction; he was also as ruthless as any of his fellow-participants in an extremely cruel war. But loyalty to the Communist creed and to his Party had posed no problems for him. Rough handling by Stalin during and after the war – vividly recounted by Djilas in *Conversations with Stalin* – sowed him more than a tiny seed of doubt in his mind; accused, with others, of being a "questionable Marxist", Djilas went back to the original Marxist texts for sustenance. On the basis of this reading, he later claimed paternity of the idea of "self-management" which has been the Yugoslav Communists' answer to what they diagnosed as "bureaucratic degeneration". In the Soviet Union, but in 1953 Djilas adapted this diagnosis to Yugoslav society, calling for more democracy and freedom, and attacking the "Yugoslav Communists themselves as 'primitives and policemen of socialism'". From then on – with only a single moment of recantation before the Yugoslav Party Central Committee – he was a persistent heretic.

Those who seek a theoretical assessment of Djilas's ideas or a literary appreciation of his fiction will not find them in Clissold's book; but here is a story of courage and honesty, of someone denounced as a traitor in the country he helped to build, but never less than his own man. It is a tale worth telling, and well told.

The short fantastic

Gerald Mangan

RON BUTLIN
The Tiling Room
 136pp. Edinburgh: Canongate. £6.50
 (paperback, £2.95).
 0862410517
 JAMES KELMAN
Nat Not While the Gira and other stories
 207pp. Edinburgh: Polygon. £8.95
 (paperback, £3.95).
 090491617

Scotland would seem to have been fertile ground for the short story in recent years. Could it be, as Frank O'Connor once explained a comparable bias in Ireland, that short fiction is perfect for a small country — a "peripheral" society that grudges the scope for a fuller development of character? If so, both Ron Butlin and James Kelman have evidently learned how to exploit the limitations.

Most of the stories in Butlin's *The Tiling Room* are told in the first person and present tense, often by a lonely narrator whose senses are slightly deranged. In the room of the title-story, where the right-angles have gone seriously wrong, the natural order is so far askew that "gaps in eternity" open up, to show lascivious children growing decrepit with age. Dreaming and waking overlap ambiguously; hidden forces break out with violent effects. In "The Cousins" a girl and a boy in the throes of puberty, killing time on a country holiday, wreak havoc with a ouija board. In "The Child and the Man", an even more eerie tale, a youth is inspired to murder when he mistakes his libido for the spirit of his dead father.

The voice is disconcertingly calm and lucid. Whether he's blinded by a doctor, shot down by soldiers in the street, or induced by Nazi torturers to rape a Jewess who has become an object of his fantasies, the narrator's response is always oblique, at times amused. In some of the sketchier pieces, cross-purposes are left unsorted, but cross-purposes are of the essence in the best of these narratives, too — most subtly when private fantasies imprison the characters who feed on them. Voyeurs of their own passions, the couple in "Conversations with Sheila" conduct an auto-erotic affair by telephone, without ever meeting; and in "The Last Days" a dying magnate becomes an addict of remorse by reading home-truths in his dead

wife's diary. Butlin's cool and lyrical style gives the collection much of its distinction.

The narrators of *Nat Not While the Gira* are often equally solitary and insecure, but James Kelman's Glasgow accent places them squarely in more tangible surroundings. In one story he transcribes the vernacular at its most dense ("A hid fuck aw bar some smash . . ."), but elsewhere, by adopting only its rhythms and idioms, he keeps the prose readable as well as authentic. Speaking the same voice as his characters, yet avoiding all the pitfalls of condescension and nostalgia, he mines a rich ore from many unexplored seams of working-class life: tenements, dole-queues, dog-tracks, smoker-halls, football-grounds and so on.

In Kelman's closely-observed characters, this perspective is never altered or threatened: although work or hope often lure them south and north, very few of his workers, idlers, boozers and born losers display any ambition beyond the next winning-pot. Kelman's stories can be as funny as Daman Runyon's, but his underworld is not a caricature. If it tends to be a male preserve, where women are mainly off-stage wives or taciturn objects of conquest, this is perhaps just a less happy aspect of its realism.

The partiality of the vision is often its strength, in fact, and the brevity of the illuminations often the most intense. In three disciplined pages "Wee Horrors" turns up the underside of a half-demolished city like the insect-life under a stone. When a milkman is unhinged by a falling corpse in "The Block", Kelman makes a black comedy of his subjective vision; and by its very understatement, the single paragraph of "Acid", which Alasdair Gray cheerfully plagiarized for his novel *Lanark*, makes a horrible industrial accident unforgettable.

The bumdrum readily breeds the fantastic, as in Butlin's stories, and confinement makes the fantasy poisonous. As a daydreamer and self-confessed "hopeless case", the unemployed narrator of the long title-story typifies the failings and misfortunes of several others. Finally paralysed between his last smoke and his next Giro cheque, he nurses his hungers and grudges with grandiose pipe-dreams, but finds his initiatives cancelled out by the double negatives of poverty. This combines the keenest of Kelman's humour and pathos, but his perceptions in all these stories are acute.

Scottish division

Brian Morton

NORMAN MACCOLM MACDONALD
Calum Tod
 127pp. Edinburgh: Canongate. £6.95.
 0862410444

Calum Tod himself only emerges clearly towards the end of the novel that bears his name. The book's subject is not the eponymous hero but the nature of eponymy itself, the relationship between a life that is contingent, fragmented, discontinuous, and the literary "life" that leads it shape and meaning.

Calum is revealed in an office in Notting Hill, an employee of Automatic Spares, shuffling notes towards the novel that is, literally, his life. Calum's friend Sean reads his literary efforts and comments on their significance: the first break in Calum's wheezing, disjointed account of his life and ancestry. Sean identifies Tod's literary sources in Butor and the Existentialists, and his psychological inspiration in the desire to be an experimenter in life as in writing; even Calum's lovers, Beatrice and Helen, are chosen for their literary associations, and because they embody, dark and light, the deep divisions in Calum's Scottish nature. At the end of the book — in a chapter headed, rather obviously, "Tynd" — Calum, back in his native Hebrides, marks the end of his literary "life" by burning the manuscript of his novel.

Intervened with the book's occasionally pretentious use of "metatextual" are powerful and consistent threads of symbolism. The novel is burnt on a dunghill at his mother's cottage; ordure and fertility develop a strong significance throughout the novel, linked to the broken idyll of Hebridean life and invasion by an alien culture. The land around the crofts is no longer fertile; modern septic tanks have poisoned the soil, and the spring muck-spreading is now only a gesture at past customs. The boy's first experience of a proper lavatory bowl is traumatic; confused, he makes a mess and is humiliated before his school-friends. His sense of shame is persuasively linked to his first learning of English.

The loss of fertility and the consequent break-up of a traditional way of life is linked, as

in George Mackay Brown and Lewis Grassie Gibbon, with a radical disturbance of sexuality. The island women no longer cut past but trade sexual favours for imported coal; there's a sour Freudian point in the way that manure becomes filth, and money, rather than barter, becomes the key to life, a sexual lever. The Asian shopgirls that move into the islands, introducing a new alien beauty that supplants the "Armuda" Spaniard look of South Rona, are analogous to the South Sea prostitutes and Eastern geishas who tempt the islandmen when they give up fishing and crafting and sign on aboard deep-sea ships. Away from home and the magical healing of seventh daughters, the illness is syphilis — a disease paid for in the brothels — and at home in the Hebrides, the children are born marked and sickly. The herings bought in London are male, containing sour grey milks rather than the creamy roes of unspent females; only the predatory wild-woman Calum encounters at an exiles' club finds a female fish. She represents a sexual and cultural choice Calum is unable to make. If the symbolism seems heavy-handed when isolated, it is never so in reading.

Calum has suffered the two endemic diseases of the modern Gael, alcoholism and schizophrenia. His book is inchoate because his life has been inchoate; his physical and mental life leave him wrecked by the collision between the penetrative "vision" of his Gaelic heritage (now only to be captured in whisky) and the analytic pragmatism of London, Automatic Spares and the alien language in which he writes.

Gaelic verse represents a powerful tradition, the Gaelic novel a largely barren one (though there is no reason why Gaelic writers should feel constrained to write novels). Norman Macdonald's achievement has been to convey a Celtic sensibility, with all its contradictions intact, in a non-Celtic medium. *Calum Tod* was first published in 1976 by Club Leabhar; in its revised form, it is an impressive performance. Macdonald has gone beyond autobiography, and beyond a self-serving examination of the limits of fiction, to explore Gaelicdom in a way that is worth any amount of Development Board rhetoric and linguistic chauvinism.

Criminal proceedings

T. J. Binyon

IAN MOFFITT
The Retreat of Radnace
 324pp. Collins. £7.95.
 0002227010

Quinn lives alone in a shack outside Sydney, brooding over his lost family, and over a unsuited witness as a nineteen-year-old journalist during the Civil War in China. Thirty years later his obsession comes to a head: he returns to Hong Kong to exact vengeance on the perpetrators of the massacre: Larsen, a psychotic American, and Keh, formerly a Nationalist general, now a heroin millionaire in Taiwan. The author obviously intends his work to be much more than an ordinary thriller, and some of his scenes and descriptions — particularly of mainland China — have undeniable colour and power. Other episodes, however, seem overblown and overdone, with lush writing concealing thin content. And, Dostoevsky notwithstanding, it's not always a good idea to have a central character who's out to lunch most of the time. But as present action replaces past reminiscence the book improves, ending with an affecting and bold cadenza.

DUFF HART DAVIS

Fire Falcon
 287pp. Cape. £7.95
 028402803

"Obsessed with hatred of the Forestry Commission's huge plantations of conifers in Scotland, a young man calling himself Fire Falcon sets fire to one plantation, and then another, causing the death of two American tourists." Duff Hart Davis keeps very close to the ground here: every step of his fugitive's progress, pursued by the police, through the mountains

of the West Coast to the climax in Knoydart, can be followed on the relevant sheet of the Ordnance Survey. This is gripping and exceedingly well done, though the pace is occasionally — and annoyingly — interrupted by some over-developed minor characters. Perhaps the author should have given himself more space and written a real blockbuster.

ARTHUR MALING

A Taste of Treason
 241pp. Gollancz. £7.95.
 0375 033428

Brock Potter, Arthur Maling's tight-laced, quintessentially Ivy League hero-narrator, is a leading light in the well-known New York brokerage firm Price, Potter, and Petaque. He's used to financial chicanery, but gets in rather above his head — and suffers a terrible loss — when he tries to track down an East German spy ring that is stealing US industrial secrets. Solid background and cunning dénouement: though violence sounds oddish, when mediated through Potter's urbane utterance.

ROY LEWIS

A Limited Vision
 187pp. Collins. £6.75.
 0002319322

Eric Ward, Roy Lewis's Northern soldier, is recovering from a serious eye operation when he's offered a job by an entrepreneur who is moving into the entertainment industry in the North-East. But the move is opposed by local vested interests. Threats are made, followed by violence, and Ward narrowly escapes death before sorting the matter out. Solid and unpretentious, as always, the Geordie background is tough, salty and realistic.

Extracting the essence

Arthur Calder-Marshall

SUSAN CHITTY (Editor)
As Once in May: The Early Autobiography of Antonia White and other writings
 300pp. Virago. £10.95.
 0860683524

Antonia White wrote millions of words during her long life, starting with advertising copy at sixteen, graduating to journalism and ending with thirty-five volumes of French translations. She supported herself and her family by her pen, and yet she suffered from "a writer's block". "I have a superb collection of beginnings," she wrote Joseph Thorpe in 1940, to explain why she had written no novel since her initial masterpiece, *Frost in May*. In 1950 the block was cleared and in five years she produced the Clara Batchelor trilogy, three novels as independent and interrelated as the plays of the Aeschylean *Oresteia*. Thereafter, the block descended once more.

In her introduction, Susan Chitty, Antonia's elder daughter, writes,

The condition is illustrated in the three major pieces in this book, *Julian Tye*, *Clara IV* and the *Autobiography*. Antonia blamed the block on the disgrace brought upon her by the story she wrote at the convent, the story which led to her rejection both by the nuns and by her father.

There may have been another reason for Antonia's inability to write her fifth novel: the nearer she came to the present the more likely she was to offend the living. Also, the closer events became, the less was she able to distance herself from them as was powered by an unreadable story written in the fifties about her daughters called "Happy Release".

Lady Chitty's explanation is certainly true of *Clara IV* and *Julian Tye*. Antonia found it hard to depart from facts, but instinctively employed false names. Her splendid essay (here reprinted from *The Old School* in the section headed "Ephemera"), disguises The Convent of the Sacred Heart, Roehampton, as the Order of the Five Wounds, Lippington. She abandoned her real name, Elrene Botting, for the pen name Antonia White (the surname being her mother's maiden name). She wrote of herself as Nanda, Clara Batchelor, Julia Tye.

What released Antonia to write *Frost in May* was the death of her father in 1929. I suspect that she did not begin her trilogy until her mother had died. Further confirmation was provided by the existence of surviving husbands and children. Artistically, *Clara IV* was a false beginning. The trilogy was complete in itself. The substitution of Julia Tye for Clara Batchelor provided her with five brilliant chapters for what might have been another trilogy . . . but for the block of reticence.

Of "The House of Clouds", Antonia's first real story, based on her insanity in Bedlam, Miles Mayhew (Tom Hopkinson) tells Julia Tye.

You'd kept a literal day-to-day diary of what . . . what happened to you. It would have been as boring as hell to anyone but a doctor. But in a few pages you've extracted the essence of the thing. It's all the difference between a poem and a clinical report.

Antonia needed to draw on real life experience to extract literary essence. (In *Beyond the Glass* she re-used the Bedlam experience with even deeper significance.) When she drew on imagination, as in "Mon Pays" (est la Martinière), written about 1922, but not published until 1960, good writing proved not enough. Lady Chitty surprised Antonia did not succeed in writing this story for a magazine. I wonder if she had awareness by emphasis on bright colours, as D. H. Lawrence had done in *The Trespasser*. She may have decided that this was not her sort of writing. Also unpublished were two autobiographical sketches containing raw material which she distilled in her novels.

The *Early Autobiography* occupies almost half the book. The volume of diaries and letters which Lady Chitty hopes to publish later may make Antonia's intentions clear: to make her own nobility to her snobility to acknowledge the worth of forefathers despite their humble origin and the awkwardness of her own childhood.

There are splendid icons of little the four-year-old bridesmaid whose portrait later appropriated by her mother, the bridesmaid's gold

Gardens; playing "Mr and Mrs John Barker of Kensington" in the nursery, with Cecil teaching in his study just next door; the discovery that the inner tangle first engendered by her boy lover could be recreated by her own hand. Most powerful of all is the relationship with her father: the schoolmaster making her learn the first line of the *Iliad* at the age of four, the Greek and Roman names of the classical pantheon; the unpredictable father, now threatening to beat her bare buttocks with a ruler, now taking her to Appenrods to gorge on cream cakes after visiting the British Museum.

Many of these childhood memories may have been resurrected in the course of psychoanalysis during the 1930s, when The Beast returned not as insanity but schizophrenia: as, for example, her Money Trauma. Going into her father's study, she found a pupil waiting. He was as delighted at her precocious knowledge of Greek that he gave her half a sovereign, which her father promptly returned, saying

"It was extremely generous of you but I'm sure you'll see my point of view. . . Don't worry. By tomorrow she'll have forgotten all about it."

He was wrong. After seventy-two years I have not forgotten that breathless moment of possession and the bitter sense of injustice when my treasure was snatched away. I wonder if that pupil whose name I never knew and whose face I do not remember, ever realised that, unintentionally, he had won the seed not only of as pretty a complex about money as any psychologist could be called on to resolve but of a conviction that the more passionately I wanted something, the more unlikely it was to be allowed to have it.

The words that I have italicized apply equally well to Nanda and Clara, although little Elrene, with her atheistical father, her vague longing for God in all his manifestations and her pleasure in sex, is altogether less inhibited.

Antonia White spent her last fifteen years writing and rewriting this unfinished autobiography. If she had considered it a work of fiction, a prelude to *Frost in May*, she might have bridged the gap between the age of four and the age of nine, when her father, having been received in the Roman Catholic Church, tightened the screw on Nanda's conflicts by sending her to a convent for girls accustomed from birth to tiles, wealth and Catholic practice. But, for what we have received let us be thankful. Everything is interesting which illuminates the way the tragic life of Elrene was refined into the books of Antonia White.

The diagnostician diagnosed

Grevel Lindop

DANNIE ABSE
A Strong Dose of Myself
 220pp. Hutchinson. £8.95.
 0091512603

Why are other people's lives so interesting? Why, for example, should we want to hear about Dannie Abse's feelings as he sorts through a heap of badly developed X-rays at the chest clinic on a Friday evening? Apparently our curiosity about one another is insatiable, and with a shrewd awareness of that principle and a good writing proved not enough. Lady Chitty surprised Antonia did not succeed in writing this story for a magazine. I wonder if she had awareness by emphasis on bright colours, as D. H. Lawrence had done in *The Trespasser*. She may have decided that this was not her sort of writing. Also unpublished were two autobiographical sketches containing raw material which she distilled in her novels.

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There are splendid icons of little the four-year-old bridesmaid whose portrait later appropriated by her mother, the bridesmaid's gold

The way people live

Vernon Scannell

PHILIP OAKES
At the Jazz Band Ball: a memory of the 1950s
 251pp. André Deutsch. £8.95.
 0233 975918

At the Jazz Band Ball is the last volume of Philip Oakes's autobiographical trilogy which, with *From Middle England and Dwellers All in Time and Space*, presents an account of the principal events of the author's life from the age of eight to twenty-eight or thereabouts, providing vivid and authentic pictures of lower middle and working-class life in England during the mid-1930s, the 1940s and 1950s. The second volume ended with the seventeen-year-old Oakes in wartime London with Emma, his pregnant and thirty-one-year-old mistress and former House Mother at the orphanage from which he had escaped. Now we learn that Emma finds herself a house-keeping job with a tolerant middle-class family where she can have the baby and she makes no demands of any kind on the young father, who has become erotically involved with Sadie, a rather stupid but presumably desirable girl whom he first met at the Methodist orphanage in Lancashire. He finds work with a seedy news agency which specializes in providing accounts of police court trials and shortly after the end of war in Europe, he is called up to do his National Service in the Army. He is posted to the Middle East and spends a period in Cairo on a magazine for the troops called *Parade* and, when this folds, he is sent to Athens as a reporter on another services publication, the daily *Union Jack*. Back in England he returns to his agency job, meets a fellow eccentric and bohemian characters including the jazz men, Mick Mulligan and the young George Melly, finally severs his relationship with Sadie, and has other entanglements before marrying the eminently marriageable Stella.

While all these events are taking place Oakes and the reader are uneasily aware of the presence in bleak, faraway Burslem, of his invalid and ageing mother, puritanical, censorious and sternly loving. The quality of their relationship is nicely captured: the frustration, comedy and pathos of their mutual misunderstandings, resentment and inarticulate tenderness. He longs for her respect and admiration but the gulf between their worlds is impossibly

wide. During one of his infrequent visits to his old home he shows her some of his short stories but she is shocked by them. He protests:

"But that's the way people are," I told her. "It's how they act and how they speak."
 "There are nice things to write about."
 "I don't know enough about them."
 "You will," she said. "Although you walk in the gutter, look up at the stars."

Mrs Oakes's homiletic axioms, it transpires, were all culled from the pages of *Reader's Digest* and when her son shows his anger and disgust at their toe-curling banality and sentimentality she says that it is the truth which hurt and "if you could write like that you'd have something to be proud of".

In the early 1950s Oakes is taken on by the weekly, *Truth*. This curious publication had, during the 1930s, deteriorated from its earlier liberal decency to the point at which it had become overtly fascist but, after the Second World War it was bought by the publisher, Ronald Staples, and it became for a few years, under the editorship of George Scott, a lively and original journal of political, social and literary comment, employing such promising young journalists as Alan Brien, Bernard Levin and Anthony Howard. While the proprietor was a "progressive Tory" and the policy of the journal was to keep within the "parameters" (I wonder if George Scott really did use, or misuse, "parameters") of what this position implied, in fact the contributors were permitted almost complete freedom of expression.

Oakes describes this period of his own maturing as a journalist and imaginative writer with delicacy and precision and in *At the Jazz Band Ball*, as in its two predecessors, shows a quite unusual gift for pitilessly accurate self-portraiture. It is the kind of honesty that is unusual in any author — one finds it in the early Isherwood and MacLaren-Ross — but in a middle-aged writer it is particularly rare. It is only in one or two of his accounts of other people that his judgment seems to waver: some of the people who obviously engaged his affection and admiration come across as less than entirely lovable.

At the Jazz Band Ball ends with the death of Oakes's mother, a scene written with perfect tact and precision. I found this very moving and the whole trilogy deserves a place among those few autobiographies of the twentieth century that demand to be preserved.

Haunting the girls

Alan Bold

FRED URQUHART
Seven Ghosts in Search
 220pp. William Kimber. £6.95.
 0718305019

It is Fred Urquhart's belief that the modern Scottish short story derives its strength from the tradition of the popular ballad, and Urquhart himself episcopally incorporates in his stories several narrative features associated with the ballade. He plunges straight into the action ("The black ghost chuckled venomously and vanished"), skillfully uses dialogue to convey character, knows the persuasive power of folklore, and is determined to let events speak for themselves without moralistic comment. In these seven ghost stories Urquhart also suggests, as do the ballads, that the present is haunted by a supernatural past.

One of Urquhart's obsessions is the vulnerability of young working women. His well-known story "The Bike", for example, presents a warehouse worker, Annie, whose romantic dreams are shattered when her bike is broken. "Proud Lady in a Cage", the concluding story in the present collection, has a heroine whose problems have a supernatural foundation. Bella Logan, incarcerated daily in the enquiry desk of a supermarket, is introduced as one of Urquhart's typical young Scotswomen. "She knew nothing of history or tradition, she was prosaic and unromantic. She never read a book." Yet she is emotionally overwhelmed by the expertise of her imagination. Bella in her supermarket becomes the reincarnation of Isabella, Countess of Buchan, who was, in 1306, placed in a cage hanging

from the walls of Berwick Castle.

Urquhart's ghost stories repeatedly confront modern characters with disturbing figures who lurk in their dreams and nightmares. In "The Lady of Sweetheart Abbey" the heroine, Maggie Crompton, seems at a safe distance from Scotland as she lives with her husband in Oklahoma. It soon becomes apparent that she is tied to the past, however, since her mother raised her by reciting "every Scottish ballad she could remember and she got Maggie to learn them off by heart, too". Before she returns to her homeland in person Maggie has seen it in nightmares. The reality is both majestic and macabre; Devorgilla of Galloway, the Lady of Sweetheart Abbey, imposes her spectral presence on Maggie and her no-nonsense American husband.

Such tales do not permit the reader to seek rational explanations: Urquhart always insists on a suspension of disbelief, even when the point of a story is mainly humorous. "Weep No More, My Lady" opens on a discussion between two ghosts. One of them, Mercy Milligan, is a supernatural Scottish Nationalist with a grievance against the National Union of British Ghosts. "It might be easier if there was a Scottish National Union of Ghosts. What a pity we hadn't gotten killed at Kilmahon Castle. We'd have been a lot happier in our ain fresh Hellan' air."

One of Scotland's finest living storytellers, Urquhart has put together a collection that displays his skill in a particularly satisfying way, the items being thematically linked. Urquhart has always had a special interest in female psychology: here he offers some splendid, and witty, tales as well as the spirited adventures of young women who outwit even death.

Unreformed reformers

Bruce Lenman

NORMAN MACDOUGALL opens *Church, Politics and Society* with an attempt to rescue the fifteenth-century Bishop James Kennedy from his apotheosis at the hands of that great technical scholar the late Annie Dunlop, in her heyday the button-booted glory and scourge of Scottish medieval studies. Kennedy emerges in the end as less than a saint, and not a very successful politician, but an interesting and many-sided figure nevertheless. Bishop Elphinstone, who was to Aberdeen University what Kennedy was to St Salvator's College in St Andrews, is lucky in that Leslie Macfarlane, who deals with him here, is clearly convinced that he was a saint, and who are we to disagree with a man who has devoted more than an academic lifetime to Elphinstone's biography? What worries me is the argument that the medieval kirk could have been reformed from within, which is hardly history and misses the point made by several later contributors: that the institutional scandals of the medieval kirk proved largely resistant to change even after 1560.

The historiography of Scotland is undoubtedly over-weighted towards ecclesiastical history. Whereas Irish history suffered until quite recently from a virtual conspiracy on the part of the British liberal establishment to minimize the social reality and social significance of sectarian division, much the same establishment has always been happy to think of Scotland, well into the nineteenth century, as a land of devout farmers and tradesmen obsessed to the point of absurdity with contentious points of divinity. The task of returning matters ecclesiastical to their contemporary context and scale of significance is therefore rather an uphill one for Scottish historians, but this book should constitute an irrevocable advance in what too often seems to be a Sisyphean toil. It is the outcome of a joint seminar programme organized by the Departments of Ecclesiastical and Scottish History in the St John's Centre for Advanced Historical Studies in the University of St Andrews. Inevitably, the contributions are uneven in quality, and the balance of the volume is ecclesiastical in the sense that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which constitute a quarter of the period professed, receive only a twelfth of the space, but the overall impression is one of freshness and, on the whole, of tough-mindedness.

End of the line

Caroline Bingham

JAMES LEES-MILNE
The Last Stuart
244pp. Chatto and Windus/Hogarth Press.
£12.50.
07011 27201

The Stuart dynasty took a long time to die. James VII of Scotland and II of England lost his kingdoms in 1688; his son and grandsons spent 119 years failing to recover them. This Stuart twilight occupied the entire lifetimes of the *de jure* James VIII and III and his sons Charles Edward Stuart and Henry Benedict, Cardinal Duke of York. The natural centerpiece of a narrative covering these years might be expected to be the Rising of 1745, the watershed of Jacobite hopes, after which the political decline of the dynasty was followed by its extinction. But James Lees-Milne boldly omits any account of the Forty-five as an unnecessary recapitulation of an overwritten episode. He is right to do so. The omission itself reveals the extent to which the Forty-five was an unwelcome sideshow in European politics and it also leaves Lees-Milne further scope to examine the characters of the uncrowned King and his sons.

James "VIII and III", as the events of the Fifteen showed, lacked the character to inspire his followers or to attract the undecided to his cause; but his moral qualities always impressed those who knew him well. His religion was tinged by fanaticism. In 1718 he wrote: "I am a Catholic, but I am a King, and subject of whatever religion they may be, have an equal right to be protected. I am a King, but as the Pope himself told me, I am not an Apostle; I am not bound to convert my people otherwise than by my example." That he had no people to convert he came to accept with fatalism. Charles Edward Stuart abjured the religion which had cost his grandfather his kingdoms and debarr'd his father from them. On a secret visit to London in 1750 he was received into the Anglican Church. Probably in St Mary's Strand. Had he decided in 1745 that Edinburgh was worth a sermon some advantage might have resulted, but he gained nothing by an Anglican conversion which was made years too late. The same ineptitude characterized his marriage. After years of dispute bachelorhood he married Louise of Stolberg in 1772 for the purpose of continuing the Stuart line; by this time his declining health made his negoti-

ating of an heir unlikely and in any case the birth of a Stuart prince would have been without political significance in Europe or Britain. Numerous biographers have commented on the "dichotomy" between the characters of Charles Edward the tragic hero of the Forty-five, and Charles Edward the wandering drunkard, whose alcoholism brought him to his grave the year before the outbreak of the French Revolution. Lees-Milne's narrative contains the inference, though he does not draw it, that there was no dichotomy: the hero and the drunkard were alike in their refusal to accept reality. The hero refused to believe that he could not win his father's kingdoms with the aid of "The Seven Men of Moldart" and his own powers of persuasion; the drunkard refused to believe that one day his British subjects would not summon him home to reign. To the end of his life he kept a chest of money under his bed to defray the cost of his voyage to Britain.

Henry Benedict rejected both his father's fatalism and his brother's fantasizing. In 1747 he entered the Church of Rome with a genuine vocation to the priesthood and a determination to pursue a career more fulfilling than that of an unemployed royal exile. As Cardinal-Bishop of Frascati, enriched by benefices in Flanders, Spain, Naples, France and Mexico, he seemed to have overcome the proverbial ill-fortune of the Stuarts. But he was not to escape it. The Napoleonic invasion of Italy made him a penniless fugitive, only rescued by the generosity of George III, who granted him a pension. Resigned to Frascati, he died in 1807, closing the history of his dynasty in a tranquillity which few of his ancestors had known.

Lees-Milne extends his narrative to conclude the biography of Louise of Stolberg, a Stuart only through her unhappy marriage to Charles Edward, which was terminated by a legal separation in 1784. Though Louise is a peripheral figure, she emerges as the most interesting personality of all, through her intellectual activities, her enduring love for the poet Alford, and her talent for friendship. Of all the members of this sad family, she alone would have earned a niche, for what that is worth, in the temple of fame, not by virtue of rank but of mind." Is this the author's conclusion?

The events attending the decline and fall of the Stuarts are familiar, but Mr Lees-Milne has told them in a compelling style. His interpretations of character are sometimes unexpected, but always sympathetic and objective.

hands of regional princes like the religiously conservative Earl of Huntly? The answer appears to be: only with enormous difficulty. On the other hand, the ability of local nobles to offer effective protection to those attached to the old ways may also explain why there was no vestige of a coordinated Counter-Reformation movement capable of generating the sort of ideological drive that ultimately made the Protestant Kirk irresistible. Mike Lynch demonstrates a very similar situation in the burghs, where he sees as many distinct Reformations as there were burghs. The only thing they seem to have had in common was a tendency to fudge a whole range of issues for the sake of burghal solidarity and convenience.

A piece by Roger Mason analysing the language of Reformation propaganda provides an appropriate introduction to the second half of the volume, for he shows that the Reformers started by talking mainly about religion, but ended up with an almost exclusively anti-French line. Laymen called the tune in the political dance in early modern Scotland, as Jim Kirk demonstrates in an interesting essay which starts from the failure of the Reformation to change the ancient system of patronage in ecclesiastical benefices. What happened was that by 1600 laymen other than the Crown had established a stranglehold on a great mass of that patronage. Walter Makey, in a suggestive

Twice-told troubles

Gordon Donaldson

ROSALIND MITCHISON
Lordskip to Patronage: Scotland 1603-1745
198pp. Edward Arnold. £5.95.
07131 63135

The fifth volume of the New History of Scotland is a work of analysis and reflection, stimulating for the knowledgeable reader and to be recommended for university classes and discussion groups. The style is of necessity highly compressed and towards the end a shade breathless, but on the whole makes easy and lucid reading for those already versed in the eventual story. Others, who seek a more conventional treatment, with more fact, chronology and elucidation of detail, may prefer the same author's account, at almost identical length, in 175 pages of her *History of Scotland*. The production of two such different and complementary versions deserves congratulation.

Rosalind Mitchison chides recent writers for works "relatively weak on the economic and social side", but her own book does not become expansive on economic history until after 1660, and we are not told how James VI had left the country "more prosperous". The book's strength lies (as its title suggests) in social history and the interaction of society and politics. Professor Mitchison endorses the view of others that "new men" were brought to the front by James VI and that the Presbyterian system, restored in a revolution against Charles I, proved an instrument of aristocratic leadership. She hints that the military disasters of Preston and the subsequent Cromwellian régime, which impoverished the nobility and encouraged "the meaner sort", helped to elevate the lairds. It was about this time that all landowners, however large or small their properties, achieved institutional cohesion as "barons". It is arguable, however, that in the resistance to Charles II there was a novel readiness in classes below the lairds to act without leadership from above.

Mrs Mitchison's social history extends to private life as well. Her interest in demography proves rewarding and of other general history has done justice to the role of women in economy and society. We learn (twice over) that the remarkably low level of illegitimacy is creditable to Kirk session discipline. On the other hand, architecture hardly receives adequate attention as a reflection of the life of the period, and the passing glances at intellectual interests ignore the catalogue of the library of Drimmond of Hawthornden. Another glance, at the persistence of pagan practices in the West Highlands, omits reference to the *Minerva of the Synod of Ayr*. It is poor compensation for such omissions that there are

if difficult article, sees the Covenanted Revolution as an extraordinary alliance between radical Presbyterian ministers and a laird class made buoyant and aggressive by a combination of inelastic rents and rising agricultural prices which weakened the conservative grip of the magnates. The magnate reaction in the Restoration era combined rack-renting with, if Julia Buckroyd is right, violent anti-clericalism.

Two chapters are devoted to the eighteenth century, when the Kirk by Law Established was reduced to the status of a convenient moral police force to such conspicuously godless power-brokers as Walpole and his Scottish squire, the Earl of Islay. The combined efforts of Messrs Sefton, Sher and Murdoch seem to present a picture of the dominant Moderate party in the Church of Scotland in the later eighteenth century which is hardly inspiring. Committed to creeds which they hardly believed in, they survived mainly by relying on the support of the nobles to hold off the beretiers or lairds who were all there was of a "popular" party in the Kirk. It is a pity that there is nothing here on the great Victorian revival in sectarianism, and, of course, of religion as a factor in politics. Ian MacInnes' admirably sober and judicious account of Presbyterian reunion in the twentieth century rounds off an interesting volume in a not inappropriately minor key.

instances of needless repetition.

On the causes of the troubles of the second half of the seventeenth century Mrs Mitchison is not trapped by conventional chatter about "church" and "state" but sees that the real difficulties were a refusal to accept majority decisions, even by a general assembly, and the question whether a lay voice in ecclesiastical affairs should be exercised by parliament or within the Church. When influential laymen, masquerading as "elders", dominated church courts, the result was as "erastian" as parliamentary control. Mrs Mitchison is severe on the Covenanters for "cruelty and hypocrisy", she emphasizes that far fewer of them suffered in the "killing time" than they had slain after their victories and she categorizes their treatment of episcopalian clergy as "thuggery". On that other controversial topic, the making of the Union of 1707, she is at her most judicious. Scottish "Independence" had become increasingly illusory; the basic conditions for Union had been clarified in 1702-3; the final terms made so many concessions that there was little ground for reasoned opposition. However, in the bibliography she brackets together Dr Ferguson, who revived the charge of bribery, with Dr Riley, who disproved it.

Appropriately for a New History, the book is a digest of recent findings, and the twelfth-page bibliography indicates the enormous output of Scottish historical writing in the past few years, but at the sacrifice of earlier works which are still indispensable, like Rait's *Policies and MacMillan's Worship*. Nor is it strong on guides to record sources. The author of one essential book appears as Oath, not Cash. Typographical errors, though far too numerous, do not usually mislead, but what was "vocal treasure"? The omission of a comma on p.153 produces the nonsense that a decision against patronage was made "after the Revolution" by a parliament largely English and therefore by a parliament largely English and therefore "posthumous rehabilitation" after forfeiture against her. "The concept of property in land" far from "now becoming absolute" in the late seventeenth century, surely went back to time immemorial. The terms of the Act of Security of 1704 are abbreviated to the point of misrepresentation. Did the practice of swimming take place across water on the drying routes to the sea of their volition. It is strange to read that West Highlands had "a cultural revolution to the sea". Finally the lands of the principality of Scotland do not pertain to the history of the nation, and still is, "Prince of Scotland".

Curial careerists

Christopher Cairns

JOHN F. D'AMICO
Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation
331pp. Johns Hopkins University Press.
£29.50.
08181 28600

The transition from the careful formulation of this book's title to the often-repeated "Roman Humanism" of its text projects John F. D'Amico's central proposition: that there was an intellectual movement in the papacy's career hierarchy that can be called "Roman". Yet the term "Roman" cannot be applied to Humanism in the same sense as "Florentine" or "civic" (or Venetian or Neapolitan) can: D'Amico's astute documentation itself shows how many of his subjects grew up, and were culturally formed (and often returned) elsewhere. The terms "Papal" or "curial" humanism would seem to exclude the cultural ethos of the Roman academies, which stood apart from (or even at odds with) the papacy and curia (more relief. Bembo and Bibbiena were not only curial functionaries; Castiglione is more memorable before he became papal servant, and D'Amico's portrait of the papal court might have gained perspective had he added the *Ragionamento delle corti* . . . to the witness of Priscianese. Similarly, the author's analysis of Cortesi's *De Cardinalatu* (1510)

D'Amico moves from Kristeller's formulation of Humanism as "an intellectual movement devoted to the *studia humanitatis*, those literary, historical and moral studies which developed from the renewed interest in ancient Greek and (especially) Latin writings and civilisation", to the commonly accepted results that such studies "laid the basis for a new, more immediate reinterpretation of contemporary culture". And it is perhaps the phrase "contemporary culture" which raises most doubts. Can it avoid consideration of Humanist writing in Italian, its art and architecture, and (for example) its achievement in education, in the very period (1420-1527) when its influence on the surrounding world was arguably at its most important (D'Amico offers insignificant side-glances at Raphael, almost nothing on Michelangelo and Bramante)? The focus here on Latin and written scholarship runs the risk of distortion by exclusion. Accepting D'Amico's declared determination to focus thus narrowly, one wonders, nonetheless, whether the frame is not a little cramped: whether some consideration of the social fabric might not have given his actors - Castellesi, Cortesi and Maffei - more relief. Bembo and Bibbiena were not only curial functionaries; Castiglione is more memorable before he became papal servant, and D'Amico's portrait of the papal court might have gained perspective had he added the *Ragionamento delle corti* . . . to the witness of Priscianese. Similarly, the author's analysis of Cortesi's *De Cardinalatu* (1510)

Beyond the pale

J. K. Hyde

RANDOLPH STARN
Contrary Commonweal: The Theme of Exile in Medieval and Renaissance Italy
207pp. University of California Press. £21.
0520 046153

Medieval Italy was full of exiles, yet their condition and influence have largely escaped systematic consideration by historians. This is in part due to lack of sources, for not only were some of the exiles highly articulate but the numerous efforts at peacemaking, many of them sponsored by the church, threw up a mass of documentation. The communis defined the graded disabilities of the various classes of *baniti* and recorded their names and property with characteristic bureaucratic zeal and sumptuousness with an unexpected pride; the official register of the property of the Lambertazzi family, expelled from Bologna in 1274, has on its cover a passage from Cicero's *De officiis* affirming the eternal reward awaiting those who support and preserve their patria.

The theme of *Contrary Commonweal* is that just as heresy illustrates the nature of the church, so the status and feelings of political exiles can be used to demonstrate the changing character of the medieval and early Renaissance state. Drawing chiefly on Tuscan and central Italian examples, Randolph Starn sees a sharp contrast between the numerous, highly organized and defiant exiles of the age of Dante and the more isolated, remote, resigned and even apologetic sufferers of the late fourteenth and most of the fifteenth century. This foreboding shift from the harsh, unforgiving thirteenth-century commune, whose far-reaching claims to control its citizens were doomed to perpetual frustration, to the well-established (territorial state of the Renaissance, which, undisturbed by external intervention and competing ideologies, could afford to concede and reconcile its enemies.

The evidence adduced to support this view is highly selective and the treatment of sources does not inspire confidence; the attempt to see the last drop of significance out of the minutiae of the legal process against Dante is particularly tedious and misguided. By dismissing all attempts at reconciliation in this period as fundamentally futile and insincere, and by reducing the intractable problem of conflicting claims to property, Dante's contemporaries are portrayed as ferocious partisans devoid of humanity and statesmanship alike; the sudden change of these qualities in, or all places, of the Italian scene, is utterly unconvincing. It is

only when Starn turns from the facts and rules to what he calls the voices of exile that his loose mesh of evidence begins to bear some weight; through the writings of and about exiles he succeeds in sketching in a new perspective to that familiar yet only half-understood phenomenon, the relative stabilization of the Italian political scene in the early Renaissance.

It is unfortunate that in a short and pioneering book on a complex subject, the author should have chosen to include so much extraneous and distracting material and have shed off a thorough analysis of the significance of exile in the formative period of the medieval state. The discussion of modern attitudes to alienation and responses to exile in the time of the Roman Empire do nothing to prepare the reader for the quite different world of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when the state, far from being all-powerful, was only one of several associations offering physical and legal protection to the individual.

Concentrating on political exiles, Starn deals mainly with two classes, the *confinati* who remained within the law so long as they did not stray from a prescribed area within or outside the state, and the *ribelli* who were public enemies whose rights had been forfeit through an act of rebellion or civil war. The third, fundamental category of *forbaniti* (outlaws) is much less adequately explored. The impression is given that outlawry was generally imposed as a penalty for a serious crime and that it was specifically linked to exile; however, communal statutes make it clear that outlawry could also be incurred during the course of a legal process as a consequence of some default such as insolvency or contumacy. Whether those who temporarily lost the full protection of the state in this way went to swell the ranks of the exiles or not probably depended on the number of private enemies they had. Many certainly did not, for as the chronicle of Donato Velluti makes clear, catching your enemy when he was *forbanitus* was a recognized way of pursuing a vendetta outside the permitted degrees without fear of intervention by the commune. Outlawry was generally regarded as a means of inducing obedience; even to the most drastic cases, including Dante's, outlawry could be removed by the payment of a fine.

It may be that the apparently simple fact of exile has been neglected because of the sheer complexity of the legal thinking and practice which lay behind it. Pedestrian and high-flown by turns, *Contrary Commonweal* stirs these problems without resolving them. Based as it is on a sound intuition, it is to be hoped that Starn's work will attract further study in this crucial aspect of medieval Italian political life.

might have acquired more telling relief in the "comparative context" of Machiavelli's *Principe* and Castiglione's *Cartegiano* while it should not be forgotten that the Erasmus *Institutio principis Christiani* had had an Aldine printing by 1518. Finally, D'Amico's emphasis on Erasmus's 1528 *Ciceronianus*, as the frontal attack which demonstrated the final inability of a Rome-orientated Humanism to move with the times, could have been supplemented with the *De pueris* . . . written many years before, in Rome itself, and enormously fertile for the future of European humanistic education as Eugenio Garin has shown.

Nonetheless, D'Amico is right to believe that the "Roman" current needs examination, and his exclusive approach does pay some dividends. His "slice" of Rome is well-documented for 1420-1527; he charts the fortunes of a number of humanists in the period, highlighting their curial careers and their humanist pedigrees (he gives a full picture of the structure and strictures of curial organization); he measures the progress of Latin scholarship towards the triumph of Ciceronianism in the heyday of Bembo and Sadoletto. The papal *familia* reached a total of 700 souls and the Cardinal's court 300 in the period, whereas the *famili* (contrast Florence) meant fewer courts and less factionalism.

The classical strands in Renaissance theology are identified and backed with their philosophical and Christian sources, and here the breadth of the debate is welcome indeed (Pico,

J. Davis

PINO ARLACCHI
Mafia, peasants and great estates: Society in traditional Calabria
Translated by Jonathan Steinberg
212pp. Cambridge University Press. £18.50.
0521 251362

Social research in southern Italy has in the past been distressingly fragmented. Much of the work done by northern Europeans and Americans is intensely detailed about the lives of people in small communities, but tends to lack a sense of region, history and variation, and to be negligent towards the work of Italian investigators, whose preoccupations have been rather different. Concern with the conditions of life of fellow Italians is manifested in the great parliamentary inquiries, the writings of *meridionalisti*, the work of researchers at the Institute of Agrarian Economics of Portici. Pino Arlacchi's book offers some hope that the barriers between these categories can be broken down.

His work is in the empiricist tradition of the *meridionalisti* (the most frequently and extensively quoted authority is Manlio Rossi-Doria, creator of the Portici Institute), and is historical: using statistics and literary accounts of the period 1861-1945, Arlacchi distinguishes three types of Calabrian society, what he calls "elementary forms of under-development". So, Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss are evoked, and the work of Marcel Mauss, retrofitted through Kar Polanyi and Marshall Sahlins, inspires his analysis of what may no longer be thought of as a single peasantry.

The traditional society of the Cosentino, marked by small holdings, mixed cultivation, and independence of the markets that intruded after 1861, was one in which relations of support and aid among kin and of household production, were of major importance, and it was maintained in being until the 1950s by exporting its surplus population overseas. In Arlacchi's terminology, relations of reproduction were more important than those of exchange or production. In contrast, the Crotonese was marked by a massive concentration of land in a few families, most notably the Berlingieri, by a sharp division of people into social classes by the efficient production of a few crops. It survived because the *latifondisti* exercised their delegated power to control the labour market, prevent emigration and maintain a supply of cheap labour: the system collapsed when the labour force was drafted in the Second World War, and when rural unrest in the years Im-

mediately after persuaded parliament to pass its first Agrarian Reform bill, the Legge Sila of 1950. Until then, Arlacchi writes, it was a society in which relations of production dominated those of exchange and reproduction. His third area of inquiry is the plain of Gioia Tauro and here relations of exchange dominate those of production and reproduction. With medium-sized holdings, an established commerce and a more mixed economy, the region of the Plain was in "permanent transition", flux and reflux: "informal groups held power and wealth for a while, forming and disintegrating, to be replaced by analogous groups who had risen to the top". This was a mafia society, in which reciprocal exchanges among powerful men, and between them and the weak, dominated the economy, limiting the impact of impersonal market forces.

Even from this brief summary of Arlacchi's schema likely objections may suggest themselves. Readers sensitive to the nuances of southern Italian society may find his account unduly selective. It is, for example, not really established that Hess has provided the best account of mafia in Sicily, so when Arlacchi claims that "There are no significant differences . . . between mafia . . . in the Plain of Gioia Tauro and the phenomena in western Sicily", one may wonder whether he would make that judgment if he had used the work of Blok on the tenurial system underlying mafia, or of J. and P. Schneider on the culture of western Sicily. Again, Arlacchi never justifies his claims that his three forms of Calabrian society are elementary, and other forms merely combinations of them. In his theorizing he has also cut a long story too short: to speak of kinds of relations (reproduction, production, exchange, and then of kinds of exchange) as dominating each other is not so straightforward as it is presented here. It is also curious to read a book on Italian peasants in which the only non-Italian account cited is the egregiously awful *Moral basis of a backward society*, by E. G. Banfield.

Other Italian researchers have shown a rather self-regarding idealism, exploring peasant crafts and superstition to rediscover the rustic in urban intellectuals dislocated from their supposed roots and from the mainstream of European social enquiry; they have not been particularly concerned with the experience of others, and, more aware of the difficulty of some of the concepts Arlacchi uses, have generally failed to produce any such organizing notions to distinguish among kinds of Italian rural society. So in spite of its defects, Arlacchi's work will be a stimulus to research in southern Italy.

Broadside on

Bryan Ranft

RICHARD HOUGH
The Great War at Sea 1914-1918
333pp. Oxford University Press. £14.50.
0192158716

This book originated in approaches made to Richard Hough by Arthur Marder and his publishers to write a one-volume history of the Royal Navy in the First World War, for which he would have the use not only of the material assembled for Marder's five-volume *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* (1961-70), but of all of Marder's papers, including those collected for further revised and expanded editions. Only the revised Jutland volume had appeared by 1978 and Marder's death two years later ended the possibility of more. In these circumstances, the reader of the present work would legitimately expect it to incorporate the bulk of recent research, which Marder would certainly have utilized, and for it to be written with the precision of judgment supported by sound scholarly apparatus which characterized Marder's magisterial achievement. He will be disappointed.

For example, Mr Hough gives no evidence of having read Jon Sumida's controversial but well-founded revisionist article, "British Capital Ship Design and Fire Control in the Dreadnought Era" (1979), which was known to Marder, as was Sumida's wider original research on the dispute between Arthur Hungerford Pollard and the Admiralty over his fire-control inventions. Had he done so Hough might have had second thoughts about writing in his account of post-Jutland thinking that "No one could find fault with British director gear". On wider issues, Donald M. Schurman's *Julian S. Corbett, 1854-1922; Historian of British Maritime Policy from Drake to Jellicoe* (1981), seems to have escaped Hough's attention, as has Holger H. Herwig's *The German Naval Officer Corps* (1973); to name only two authoritative secondary works. Such omissions are compounded by an inadequate bibliography and defective references. The bulk of those relating to documentary sources are lacking the detail needed by scholars wishing to follow them up, and some quotations are given without any attribution whatsoever.

There are some extraordinary judgments on important personalities. Lloyd George is

described as an "arch-pacifist" and King George V as "an Admiral of the Fleet of great experience". More serious is a tendency to make general judgments which have cumulatively misleading or over-simplifying effects. Thus a frequent reference to the absence of "brains" among senior officers, the citing of Admiral Heneage, with his obsession for cleanliness, as not being exceptional, and of the Admiralty's having long since "established a principle that experiment and innovation must be avoided", combine to give an impression of stultifying stupidity and conservatism which is unjustified. Hough's judgments on strategic planning and construction policy in the pre-war period are generally sound and perceptive, but are marred by a serious error in asserting that distant blockade was substituted for the traditional close blockade in 1912. A glance at Marder would have shown him that it was observational blockade, a very different concept, which came in 1912; distant blockade, which dominated Britain's naval strategy throughout the war, was not instituted until a month before hostilities began.

If such weaknesses make it impossible to recommend the book as a work of sound scholarship or as a totally reliable guide to general readers, it none the less has many merits. It is always readable and its descriptions of battle, especially its treatment of Jutland, are vivid

Cruising destructively

Peter Dickens

DAN VAN DER VAT
The Last Corsair: The story of the Emden
205pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95.
0340323450

Dan van der Vat cherishes an obsession with naval operations in the First World War and has chosen a good subject to indulge it. The commerce-raiding cruise of the German light cruiser Emden (commanded by Captain von Müller) in the Indian Ocean at the outbreak of war was a classic of its kind. Striking where least expected, then vanishing into the limitless wastes, she succeeded outstandingly in the three aims of such operations: sinking many ships, disrupting the flow of trade in the whole area, and forcing her enemies to divert disproportionate numbers of warships to find her.

cloud".

It is perhaps regrettable that Stephan and Elizabeth Usherwood have not, in the main body of the book, attempted an analysis of the venture. They comment in passing upon some matters of general interest - shipping, gunnery, seamen's health and so forth - but they make no comparison between the Lambeth journal and the various other contemporary accounts, nor do they make use of the classic modern analyses by Corbett, Oppenheim and Cruikshank. The result is a rather limited and superficial treatment.

Reference to the primary and secondary authorities would also have eliminated a number of unfortunate errors. The Spanish galleon *haya* called the *St Philippe* was in fact the *San Felipe*. The victualling general was Marmaduke Darrell, not Dorrell. Parma was Philip II's governor-general in the Netherlands, not vicerey. The Indies fleet commander mentioned was Don Luis Fajardo, not Fajorde. John Smith of Virginia fame was not "almost certainly" a captain in this expedition, since at that time he was sixteen years of age. Mr Bromley was a respectable London merchant whose men were not "part-time pirates", but engaged in legitimate privateering in the course of a trading venture. In a work which makes claim to scholarship such mistakes are impermissible, nor is it good enough to refer in the notes repeatedly to "State Papers Domestic, 1596", *tout court*, or to Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* without indicating the edition or the page. The minor imperfections accumulate, but the graceful style of this amateur history will charm many a reader as the professional product seldom can.

and accurate. Its judgments on the relative merits of British and German ships and weaponry, and the strengths and weaknesses of Betty and Jellicoe, are generally acceptable. It deals imaginatively and perceptively with the relationship between Fisher and Churchill and comes to the interesting conclusion that the latter's best work was done before 1914 and that it would have been better for the country, the navy and his own reputation if he had left office before the war began.

Considering its importance, the submarine war against merchant shipping is given comparatively little space and although Hough's analysis and criticisms are balanced and fair, he is perhaps misleading in writing that after 1917 the United States Navy "took much of the burden of providing patrols and convoy escorts off the Royal Navy". Marder's calculation is that to the end of the war Britain supplied 70 per cent of the destroyers and 61 per cent of the cruisers for convoy escorts as compared with America's 27 per cent and 35 per cent respectively.

A one-volume account of the Great War at sea, based on Marder's great work and incorporating and evaluating later research, would have met a considerable need as well as providing an appropriate tribute to a most distinguished historian. It is sad that Mr Hough has not risen to the occasion.

The British task seemed hopeless at first; but with persistence, intelligence and luck the lone cruiser was inexorably hunted down.

It is a gripping story that is greatly enhanced by the escape of fifty of the Emden's crew after their ship's destruction. Travelling by leaking sailing-ship, broken-down steamer, Arab dhow, foot, camel and train they encountered hazards comparable to Sindbad the Sailor's before they finally reached Berlin. The tale has often been told, but Mr van der Vat has done some admirable original research.

There are, however, nagging frustrations for the reader striving to understand this very subtle form of warfare. Much more could have been made of the fascinating interplay between the minds of hunters and hunted, each having to act on 20 per cent fact and 80 per cent hunch. The only map helps little, omitting all British ship movements, dates, scale, and more than thirty named places. "Müller turned north-west" (from Madras) is presumably a misprint; but it is not the only hint that the author is a little out of his element at sea. He is certainly unfortunate in not having come across Corbett's Official History, and with it the most breathless of HMS Hampshire's several naval messes with the Emden: by ten miles, in daylight, on Trafalgar Day, 1914.

The last corsair? The *OED* has "corsair" as a pirate or privateer, which the Emden was not; but even allowing van der Vat's personal definition - warship raider - "last" is enigmatic because the Germans deployed six such in the Second World War. He also excludes disguised merchant raiders and submarines from his roll of honour because they practised "stealth and deceit". But so did Captain von Müller, until he invited his own undoing by neglecting them. They are but aspects of that cardinal principle of all warfare, surprise, and absolutely central to commerce-raiding, at which the German navy - not just von Müller - was expert and, with very few lapses, honourable.

The narrative begs to be interpreted in terms of morale, particularly that of a raider's captain who must deliberately place his ship in danger again and again, exercising all his skill, determination, endurance and wits, while shouldering the crushing burden of stress for his entire crew. At the end of the Emden saga von Müller, having acted with consummate brilliance for ten long weeks, seemed to cast prudence aside and almost rushed to meet his destruction. Why, unless the strain had at last become unbearable?

Such speculation would be relevant but the opportunity has been missed. Instead, von Müller is always the hero at the expense of his enemies, who are invariably stupid or wrong; even when they win. To criticize everything British, as though on principle, is both unoriginal and, quite often, misleading.

Irregularity

Tony Geraghty

DARRIEPITT
Special Boat Squadron: The Story of the SBS in the Mediterranean
212pp. Century. £8.95.
0712611802
MERRILL L. DARTLETT (Editor)
Assault from the Sea: Essays on the History of Amphibious Warfare
453pp. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press. \$26.95.
070210882

Now that military heroes are in fashion once again, it is not surprising that publishers should go hunting them. They are a highly marketable commodity. But material is limited. For many years, most of our soldiers have been engaged in boring garrison duties in Germany. No wars, no heroes, nothing to take to market. So after the twenty or so Falklands books, the trade now rummages among old stock like an optimistic truffle hunter.

Fashions apart, however, the practitioners of irregular warfare are a natural subject for popular writing. Special forces soldiers, like fighter pilots, are still identifiable gladiators engaged in a limited arena where the individual might beat the odds against him. Warfare has also evolved in a way which legitimately enhances the military importance of these gladiators. As Michael Howard has argued, their actions were on the margins of serious warfare during the Second World War. Since 1945 they have become the mainstream of armed conflict if only because nuclear technology makes the alternative too dangerous.

The latest study, by Barrie Pitt, has much to commend it. It is the story of the SBS in the Mediterranean/Aegean campaign during the Second World War, perplexingly presented in a dust-jacket symbolic of the Falklands. (Set King helicopters and Armalite rifles were not yet available in 1943.) The campaign was an intricate ballet of small troops which performed dazzling feats of arms against ridiculous odds. Mr Pitt contrives to make strategic sense of these intricacies.

For example, he offers an explanation as to why the Allies made the fatal mistake of occupying most of the islands (except the most important, Rhodes) without first ensuring that adequate air cover was on hand, and consequently losing them again, to the great detriment of the inhabitants. For once it was not a case of wartime shortages: "The American Chiefs of Staff in general, and the 76-year-old Secretary of State for War, Mr Stimson in particular, did not want to see the development of a campaign in the Aegean. They considered it unnecessary, likely to antagonize their important ally in the fight against Hitler, Mr Stalin, by developing into a campaign in the Balkans, an area which would surely be part of Russia's circle of post-war influence. . . ." So the Lightning squadrons which had "cleared the Luftwaffe from the skies" were abruptly withdrawn. Many anecdotes may be familiar to students of guerrilla warfare, but it is refreshing to rediscover them in such a perspective.

Assault From The Sea is a team effort which starts at Marathon in 490 ac and concludes with the South Atlantic, AD 1982. Its text-book prose seems to be aimed at staff college students on some sort of crammer course. The Falklands essay by Edgar O'Ballance reads like a cuttings job based on the wrong cutting. It reaches the triumphal conclusion: "On the military side it was a textbook operation, with a little luck thrown in. . . ." The amphibious landing at San Carlos was also of textbook quality and can hardly be faulted.

No hint here, or in Pitt's brief epitaphic reference to the Falklands, that the modern (the Royal Marines) SBS reconnaissance parties were withdrawn even as San Carlos was being selected as the main beachhead, or that the beachhead was utterly compromised, or that such a landing, 8,000 miles from home without adequate air cover, was a gamble as reckless as that of the bungled Aegean campaign in 1943. Interestingly, government planners hope to use special forces to overcome this deficiency in 1982 as well as 1943. The successful Falklands landing required more than a little luck to succeed.

Touching the *botomu*

James McMullen

The Oxford-Duden Pictorial English-Japanese Dictionary
864pp. Oxford University Press. £15.
0198611494

The method of this dictionary is to offer line-drawings of a wide range of scenes and subjects. These are then keyed by numbers to descriptive lists of words in English and Japanese, arranged on the same page. Indexes in both languages are also provided. The concept of an English-Japanese dictionary organized around pictures sounds promising: something of the daunting lexical gap between the two languages might be bridged in this way. There seem, however, to have been serious shortcomings in the production of the present work. The single-volume format imposes a drastic degree of selection. Inevitably, it is possible to quarrel with the compilers' choice in many cases. It seems, for example, a little quibbly in a dictionary of this scope to illustrate an "involutar calyx with pappus bristles" ("Meadow Flowers and Wayside Flowers"), but to omit altogether reference to the common bluebell (*scilla nutans*) or to the primrose.

More seriously, this dictionary originated in a cultural milieu neither English-speaking nor Japanese, but is in fact a translation of the *Oxford-Duden Pictorial German-English Dictionary* (1980). The foreword tells us of "numerous modifications" to the German edition, but these seem insufficient. Why else, when space was so restricted, should the compilers include a beer-warmer, a Catholic procession, Continental rather than Insular Gothic architecture, and a whole page devoted to

snug-making? Conversely, such English institutions as the public house or the game of squash go unmentioned. At the same time, almost no effort appears to have been made to render the vast lexicon describing the Japanese world accessible to users. Specifically Japanese entries appear to be limited to a Buddhist temple, a bell tower, a torii, and a bodhisattva in "Art", and, relegated with embarrassing and parochial condescension to "Ethnology", a geisha and a samurai. In the last case, it is well that the warrior of the German-English version, to all appearances an invader from Mongolia, has been replaced with something more historically accurate. It would have been even better if the description "padded armour" (*tsunemono o shio yori*) keyed to this illustration had also been revised.

That said, it is to be hoped that in the technological sections, beyond this reviewer's competence, less distortion is at work. If so, this dictionary should meet a genuine need. The line-drawings themselves seem as clear as might be hoped for, some of those depicting children even having a certain charm. There are some eccentricities. In the "Restaurant" section, for instance, the tankard of beer held by a rather underfed-looking figure is explicitly identified as his "meal of the day" (*igowari ryōri*). It is doubtful also whether the draughtsman, who was presumably German, possessed much understanding of cricket, bere consigned to the bottom left-hand corner of "Ball Games II". The illustration shows a wicket and three players, remarkably in the style of Glen Baxter. The batsman stands in an odd posture, apparently executing a delicate glance to leg, while the wicket-keeper aggressively threatens to punch him over the stumps. Both wear strange caps. Baxter, one suspects, would supply a caption such as "Wolfgang remained

calm in the face of the unsporting menaces of the St Botolph players."

The Japanese equivalents for English identifications also fail to inspire much confidence. It is true, such as the accelerated penetration of the Japanese language by English in recent years, that much is simply transliteration into *katakana* of the English. It is no great surprise that "zap flap" ("Aircraft") is rendered as *zap-pu furappu*, or that most of the Japanese in the "Bathing Beach" section, including *bichi-hai-ro*, *bikini-toppu*, *bikini-botomu*, is similarly formed. Even here, however, there is carelessness. For example under "Jewellery", *pendon-to ioyoringu* (13) has become transposed with *iyoringu* (11) itself. There are mistakes too with Japanese words as opposed to English loan vocabulary. It is misleading, for instance, to give *saien* ("vegetable garden") as the equivalent of "allotment"; "card catalogue" should be translated by *mokuroku* rather than *sakuin*, which normally refers to the index of a book; and "love-lies-bleeding" is in Japanese *seminokoku* rather than *seminigiku*, which would presumably place it among the *compositae*.

Students of Japanese develop intense relationships with their dictionaries. If a dictionary fails to acquire the authority of, say, Morohashi Tetsuji's great *Dai Kan-Wo Jiten* or the oen Shogakukan *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, its very shortcomings may endear it to users, who may find the long hours of dictionary-bashing enlivened by an adversarial or satirical relationship with the lexicographers. The *Oxford-Duden Pictorial English-Japanese Dictionary* is of this second order, and seems destined unintentionally to divert its users. Or was it perhaps intended to do so from the start? The bodhisattva in "Art V" is making an unmistakable though iconographically incongruous wink.

Sticking to the rules

Peter Rickard

ANNE JUDGE and F. G. HEALEY
A Reference Grammar of Modern French
266pp. Edward Arnold. £35.
0713162856

English-speaking students of French are often required to consult grammars intended for French people, and it is obviously important that they should continue to do so from time to time. Yet the exercise is of limited value, for French grammarians (and who can blame them?) make their own presuppositions and do not write with the needs of speakers of another language in mind. Hence the exasperation of English students who try to discover from, say, *Grammaire de la Langue Française* just what the difference is between *c'est* and *il est* (a problem admirably dealt with, incidentally, on pages 79-81 of the present work).

English grammars of French are of course legion, but there is at present none in existence which can compare with this new reference grammar for sheer comprehensiveness, clarity of exposition, understanding of the student's needs, and awareness, at every level, of problems of transposition from the one language to the other. The authors' linguistic orientation permits truly accurate analysis of grammatical phenomena, while their constant preoccupation with different levels of style and with the major differences between the written and the spoken language caters admirably for the student who, perhaps brought up on a narrowly linguistic diet, might otherwise deny to French a variety of registers which he would take for granted in his own language, and indignantly defend.

The work is methodically arranged, with many cross-references and with just enough repetition to enhance its utility. The index appears at first sight to be rather ponderous, but it proves to be perfectly adequate when taken in conjunction with the extremely detailed table of contents, which spreads over nearly thirty pages.

The standard of analysis, explanation and illustration is throughout high. On nearly every page there are wise insights and helpful points of comparison of French and English style and structure, and the student's puzzlement

or query. The treatment of such major themes as tense and mood is outstanding, but secondary matters too, such as the position of the adjective and of the adverb, are treated not only thoroughly but with considerable originality. Part Five, which takes in all the elements defined in the earlier parts, has the added refinement of a special chapter on "textual organization in written French", and yet another on "the organization of spoken French". Morphological tables of course have to be included in any comprehensive grammar, and there is not much room for originality in that area, but this section too is helpfully arranged and admirably clear.

It is, however, a sad fact that the more one says or writes, the more one lays oneself open to error, and there are certainly some criticisms which must be made so that they may be taken into account in a later edition. One not unimportant feature of this grammar is that in order to make more acceptable some of the many irregularities and anomalies of Modern French, the authors have, wherever they considered it helpful, offered a brief historical explanation. They have not done so consistently, however. Thus, though the hesitant gender of *les gens* (pp 9, 269) is accounted for in historical terms, the strange behaviour of the adverbial *tout* - so often greeted with frank incredulity by students who for some reason have not been taught it at school - is not given the historical explanation which would have made it (marginally) more acceptable. It must be said, too, that some of the historical information offered is not accurate. Thus, p 6; the suffix *-esse* (according to the word to which it is added) derives in fact from two different Latin suffixes, not one; p 13; the statement that the *tr*-characterizing plurality was originally the mark of the nominative singular case is entirely misleading; the stressed *elle* does not derive from a Latin dative; p 66, the pronoun *en* does not derive from *unde*; p 146; the *tr* does not derive from the use of the subjunctive after *après que* is a historical one which is a good deal more subtle than "analogy with *avant que*"; and, pp 180-1, the use of the infinitive in prohibitions addressed to the public at large is described as "as in Old French", but in Old French the construction was used only when there was a specific interlocutor.

Occasionally, while what is stated is per-

fectedly correct as it stands, the authors' general preoccupation with other possibilities and stylistic registers might have led them to say a little more. Thus the statement (p 47, note 1) that *second* is "normally used when the count does not go beyond two" does not tell the reader whether it is actually wrong to use *deuxième* in the same circumstances, eg, in the frequently observable *la deuxième moitié du siècle*. The remark on p 68 about *soi-disant* could be taken to imply that *prétendu* cannot be used of persons. On pp 173-4 the discussion of *devoir*, though it shows awareness of translation problems, does not include the negative use illustrated by *elle ne doit pas être très intelligente*, corresponding to "she can't be very bright". If, as stated on p 304, *plus* is rarely used in contemporary French, *pire* being used instead, it is only fair to add that *de mol en pis* is correct while *de mal en pire* is not. On pp 290-302, in the otherwise admirable discussion of the affect of position on the meaning of adverbs, *évidemment* and *naturellement*, by virtue of their very high frequency, surely deserved to be singled out.

Exposition and argument can rarely be faulted. I would however venture to take issue on two points. Both concerning the subjunctive. If, on p 136, *qu'il sorte tout de suite* is an independent clause (and far be it from me to dispute it), why does it *fall* have to be "understood" in *qu'il s'en aille* on p 137? In Gido's *il semblait que nous devassions immobiles*, it could legitimately be argued that the imperfect subjunctive does not "express the unreal", for *semblait* has surely already done so. The use of the subjunctive here is just another case of *servitude grammaticale*: one might as well claim that in *il faut que je sois prêt* - the Boy Scout motto - *sois* "expresses" obligation.

The classified bibliography at the end of the volume, with its brief but apposite comments, should prove extremely useful. It is unfortunate though that some quite important specialized works referred to elsewhere in the book and not featuring in the bibliography are given inadequate references.

Such comments and reservations as these, however, do not alter the fact that we owe a considerable debt of gratitude to Anne Judge and F. G. Healey for a scholarly work of reference which is unlikely to be superseded for a great many years to come.

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